PORTRAITS OF YOUNG ARTISTS: ARTWORLDS, IN/EQUITY, AND DIS/IDENTIFICATION IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

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Using portraiture methodology and social practice theory, this study examined the identity work of young people engaged in a teen arts internship program at a contemporary arts center in post-Katrina New Orleans. This research asked four interrelated questions. Through the lens of a teen arts internship at a contemporary arts center in post-Katrina New Orleans, 1) How do contextual figured worlds influence artist identity work? 2) How does artist identity work manifest through personal narratives? 3) How does artist identity work manifest in activities? 4) What are the consequences of artist identity work? The findings of the study highlight how sociocultural factors influence dis/identification with the visual arts in young people and provoke considerations of in/equity in the arts.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On July 8, 2016, I made the journey from Texas to Louisiana to begin collecting data for my dissertation research. Road trips through Texas and Louisiana have long been significant parts of my life. As a child growing up in New Orleans, my family often drove from Louisiana through Texas on our way to visit relatives in Oklahoma. Our most harrowing of these trips was our evacuation from New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. We left New Orleans with a few items of clothing and headed for Oklahoma to stay with family, thinking we would return in a couple of days after the hurricane had passed. On the congested highways, it took us 8 hours to drive the 70 miles from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, but we kept driving, doing everything we could to keep each other awake until we arrived in a town called Mt. Pleasant in East Texas, one of the only places where we were able to find a hotel room along our path. When we awoke the next morning, the news media reported that the storm had not been as bad as predicted. Relieved, we decided to resume our trip to Oklahoma anyway. By the time we arrived at my grandparents' house in Oklahoma, the devastating breaches of the levees had begun and nearly the entire city was underwater. And, those who were still there were suffering immensely. Watching our city washing away into seemingly complete erasure, was intensely painful. We spent our days obsessively watching news reports, trying to figure out if our friends and schools and homes were going to survive. It was a devastatingly emotional and uncertain time. So, driving back through Louisiana this summer of 2016, where in many areas the only roads are bridges over rapidly disappearing wetlands, I am reminded of the vulnerability of this place that I still call home, despite living outside of New Orleans on and off over the years since

Katrina. Even as I write about this now, I get tears in my eyes with my love for this vulnerable, beautiful place of my birth.

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state: "As researchers, we come to each new inquiry field living our stories. Our participants also enter the inquiry field in the midst of living their stories" (pp. 63-64). Indeed, both researchers and participants are living within both their own personal contexts as well as the broader sociopolitical contexts of the time and place wherein research takes place. During the summer of 2016, there were several flashpoint moments of awareness around police violence against Black people in the United States that shaped the sociopolitical context of this research. For instance, during the first week of July, there were two highly publicized extrajudicial killings of Black men: Alton Sterling on July 5 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Philando Castile on July 6 in St. Anthony, Minnesota, by police officers in the United States. Video documentation of these killings was broadcast across social media, prompting nationwide discussions on unjust policing practices in the United States. The Black Lives Matter movement had mobilized protestors against these injustices in cities across the nation. On July 7, the night before I drove to New Orleans from Texas to begin my research, there was a mass shooting in Dallas at a protest rally against police brutality. I had stayed up late reading news reports and social media postings about the event, one that was particularly personally emotional for me because the husband of one of my closest friends from graduate school had been one of the organizers of the protest and both she and her husband had been present during the time of the shooting. Tensions were high and people on all sides of the conversation were outraged. In driving through Baton Rouge on my way to New Orleans, the killing of Alton Sterling was still fresh in everyone's minds. During a roadside stop at a Taco Bell in Baton Rouge, a place that I would not normally expect to see signs of political protest, I

saw that one of the cashiers had posted a printed paper with a photograph of Alton Sterling on the front of the cash register in memoriam and I could feel the rawness of the emotional turmoil related to this killing. It felt like there was a growing communal sense of outrage bubbling to the surface—making all of us who cared about social justice ready to take action to publicly express our disgust at the injustices that we were witnessing.

As I drove into New Orleans with my two children, my sister called me to tell me that she was attending a Black Lives Matter rally at Lee Circle. She urged me to stop by as I drove into town. At the time, Lee Circle hosted a monument to the Confederate general, Robert E. Lee, and had been the site of much contention in recent years with many activists facing resistance to their efforts to have this and other confederate monuments removed from public spaces in New Orleans. After some hesitation on my part and a long list of excuses—I was tired, I had just spent all day driving, I had my children with me—I decided that we would join the rally. It was an emotional, but peaceful gathering and in the crowd, I could feel the urgency of affirming the commitment to joining together to address violent injustices against African Americans and in direct response to the killings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, but also to demand the removal of confederate monuments that glorify racist injustices of the past like slavery and segregation such as the one at Lee Circle (see Figure 1.1). In May 2017, nearly a year after I completed my data collection, four confederate monuments, including the one at Lee Circle, were removed from public display. Lee Circle is only about two blocks away from the CAC, where my research takes place. Hence, it felt apt that during the rally, one of the speakers said, "Artists, we need you" (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.1. Black Lives Matter Rally at Lee Circle, New Orleans, July 8, 2016. Photograph by Tricia Travis.

Figure 1.2. Twitter post documenting Black Lives Matter Rally at Lee Circle, New Orleans, July 8, 2016

Introduction to the Study

In recent years, there has been increased movement towards the application of art and art education for social justice purposes (Dewhurst, 2014). Social justice art education often invokes issues of identity and agency within discourses of educational equity (Anderson, Gussak, Hallmark, & Paul, 2010; Dewhurst, 2014; Quinn, Ploof, & Hochtritt, 2011; Charland, 2010; Rolling, 2009, 2011, 2012). Yet, there has been limited art education research into the complexities and implications of artist identity work in young people. Using portraiture methodology (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) and social practice theory (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), in this study I examined the identity work of young people engaged in a teen arts internship program at a contemporary arts center in New Orleans, a city that increasingly has been a battleground for educational justice in the post-Katrina era (Buras, 2015). The objectives of this study were to investigate narratives that mediate artist identity work, contextual influences of identity work, and activities of artist identity work, and to consider some of the consequences of young artists' identity work in terms of art educational equity.

This study utilized portraiture methodology in an investigation of artist identity work in the social and educational worlds of artistically-identified young people. Portraiture is a hybrid methodology that contains elements of ethnography, phenomenology, narrative inquiry, and arts-based research methods (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture methodology is well-suited to research that examines educational experiences in terms of aspects of identity such as race and its intersections with class, gender, sexuality. Indeed, several educational researchers have advocated for combining portraiture methodology with critical race theory in critical educational research (e.g., Chapman, 2005; 2007; Dixson, 2005; Dixson, Chapman, & Hill,

2005; Ewing, 2016; Harding, 2005; Keene, 2014, 2016). Methods employed in this study included observational field notes, interviews, and photographic documentation of artifacts and artworks created throughout the internship.

With social practice theory as a framework, in this research I focused on how artist identities were negotiated and expressed as ever-evolving identity work through social practices (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Social practice theory has been widely applied to understand the complex processes of identity formation within various contexts (e.g., Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Calabrese Barton et al., 2013; Hatt, 2012; Leander, 2002; Lei, 2003; Wortham, 2004). Social practice theory contends that, although individuals are constrained by their positional identities, individual and collective agency, and/or resistance can manifest within the practices of identity-making in ways that transgress the limitations of oppressive social structures (Holland et al., 1998). Moreover, social practice theory recognizes artmaking as a potential space for this exertion of individual and collective agency, indicating liberatory potential in the adoption of an artist identity (Holland et al., 1998).

The research participants in this study were high school students and rising college students of diverse identifications in terms of race/ethnicity and gender/sexuality. The research context was a teen arts internship program at a contemporary arts center in New Orleans. In this study, I collected observational field notes focused on the artist identity-shaping activities of the interns engaged in various discussions, journaling exercises, workshops, artmaking, field trips, and presentations throughout the course of their internship. I also conducted individual interviews with interns that explored how their social and educational experiences have shaped their artistic identity development and how they were expressed in narratives. Additionally, I

used photography, visual art, and writing to document relevant physical spaces, artworks, and artifacts associated with the internship and the internship site.

Utilizing social practice theory and portraiture methodology, I examined how young people engage in artist identity work. In my findings, I present descriptions of what artist identity work looked like in narrative and activity-based practices. I also show how situational factors influenced the enactment of artist identity work within experiences of teen artists in contextual figured worlds such as schools, home, religion, community arts programs, museums, the media, and post-Katrina New Orleans. I also discuss the consequences of artist identity work in young people. Consequences of artist identity work may or may not involve an embrace of an artist identity with an imagined future in the arts. Further, an identification with the arts may or may not yield an increased predilection towards personal or collective agency. There are social (in)justice implications of these findings. This research, thus, offers insight into the practices of artist identity work, the contextual influences of identity work, and the implications of artist identity work in young people in terms of social (in)justice.

Background of the Study

My personal and professional experiences shape my interest in the topic of artist identity formation in young people in the context of New Orleans. As I complete this dissertation, I am currently an Instructor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where I am teaching a graduate class on curriculum theory. In this class, we are learning about the concept of *currere*, a framework for critical reflection upon the course of one's life in relation to teaching and learning (Grumet, 1988; Pinar, 1975/2004; Pinar, 2012; Pinar and Grumet, 1976). Pinar (2012)

discusses how in considering "education as self-formation" (p. 44), curriculum as *currere* links past, present, and future selves:

> As a verb—*currere*—curriculum becomes a complicated, that is, multiply referenced, conversation in which interlocutors are speaking not only among themselves but to those not present, not only to historical figures and unnamed peoples and places they may be studying, but to politicians and parents alive and dead, not to mention to the selves they have been, are in the process of becoming, and someday may become. (p. 43)

In this research, the themes of past, present, and future selves emerged at multiple points—within the internship activities, within the participant narratives, and in consideration of the sociohistorical contexts of the lives of the young artists. Teaching my graduate students about *currere* as I work through the revision of my dissertation with efforts to bring my own past, present, and future stories, my own voice, my own positionality, and my own sociohistorical contexts into greater focus in the text of the dissertation, I am energized to describe how my own path has shaped and will continue to shape my teaching, learning, and research. Pinar (2012) states that "the teacher is…an artist; complicated conversation is his or her medium" (p. 54). Although I acknowledge the complexities involved in reflexivity, I have striven to make my curriculum, pedagogy, and research increasingly centered around such critical self-reflection and "complicated conversation" (Kraehe, Hood, & Travis, 2015; Travis & Hood, 2016; Travis, Kraehe, Hood, & Lewis, 2018). Thus, it is a fulfilling challenge to push myself to be even more critically self-reflective upon my own path of teaching, learning, and research across art education as I revise my dissertation.

In 2004, I began my art education career as an itinerant art teacher in New Orleans Public Schools. William Frantz Elementary, the school that Ruby Bridges famously integrated in 1960, a pivotal event in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, Frantz served as my home-base. During my year of teaching at William Frantz Elementary, the school's student body and its teaching staff

were nearly all African American. As a young White teacher who traveled between different New Orleans public schools throughout the week to work with students in the Talented in the Arts-Visual (TAV) program, I was often asked if I was a college student volunteer because I seemed "out of place" because of my whiteness and my youth and because I only visited each school for a few hours a week.

The TAV students who I served at Frantz and other schools were children who the school district identified as having talent in the visual arts. They had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that mandated that they receive special education instruction in the visual arts. In many of the public schools in New Orleans, there was only one child who was formally identified as having talent in the visual arts and thus warranting art instruction. In most schools, there was no other avenue by which to receive art education meaning that most students in New Orleans did not receive art education instruction from an art teacher. I, as a student of New Orleans public schools, albeit the elite ones, also did not have a visual arts teacher until I became identified as a TAV student in fifth grade.

During my time as an itinerant art teacher, I quickly recognized the inequity involved in a system that only identified a small number of students as needing art education and that the right to art education was only afforded to those who had been identified as "talented." Over the year, I began to invite other students who expressed an interest in art to join in the TAV class sessions informally. Over time, my guest students accumulated a body of work, and I used these work samples to recommend them for "testing" for inclusion in the TAV program. By August 2005, at the beginning of my second year as an itinerant art teacher in New Orleans, I had been able to successfully identify and get several new students tested and accepted into the TAV program. I was, thus, excited to start the school year with a bigger group of young artists. I remember going

to school during the first week of classes in August 2005 and excitedly telling my newly identified art students that they would be able to officially join the TAV program. Yet, just days after the school year started, on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans, forever changing the course of all of our lives—a *currere*-shaping time. Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath prompted a complete transformation of public education in the city into a nearly all-charter system. And, although there have been monumental changes in the educational system, segregation and inequities along lines of race and class have remained steadily in place (Weixler, Barrett, & Harris, 2017).

Within post-Katrina media reports about New Orleans public education, there have been stories of exceptional students who rise above the challenges they face—in some cases through arts education. One of these students is Leonard Galmon, who was born to a 13-year old mother, coped with the murder of his father when he was a young child, was displaced to Houston because of Hurricane Katrina, and returned to New Orleans to attend one of the lowest performing schools in the city (CBS This Morning, 2014; Dreilinger, 2014). Galmon's story shifted when he became involved in the visual arts and was accepted into an elite public arts high school during his senior year, an opportunity that led to his admittance to Yale University. This story is presented as an inspirational example of how the arts can transform student lives and how participation in the arts can yield opportunities that allow students to overcome adversity. Galmon recently participated in a documentary series about Black students at Yale (Now, In Color, 2018) and continues to work as an artist and has had his work shown at Arthur Roger Gallery in New Orleans (Arthur Roger Gallery, n.d.). However, Galmon's story is an anomaly rather than the norm because inequity continues to plague public education in New Orleans and elsewhere, with consequences that are exceptionally dire for Black students. And, while the arts

can offer avenues towards social and educational justice, there remains a great deal of work to be done towards increasing equity within art education (Kraehe, 2017; Kraehe et al., 2016).

As a student and later an art educator in New Orleans public schools, I saw first-hand how socioeconomic inequality placed limits on the fulfillment of artistic potential. In many ways, the story of Leonard Galmon described above reminded me of my own former art students in New Orleans—and how the course of their lives as young artists was shaped by the intersection of personal, environmental, historical, social, and cultural contexts. Motivated by these early observations and experiences as an art educator, my dissertation inquiry focuses on artist identity formation among adolescents in post-Katrina New Orleans. In selecting a site for this research, because of my experiences as an art educator committed to the promise of public education, I initially intended to conduct my study within a school setting and with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. However, in learning about a summer internship for teens at a contemporary arts center that was built around opportunities for the development of artist identities, I opted to work with this program.

As it turned out, the interns of this program are what would be considered relatively privileged elites in New Orleans, many of whom attended private schools or public schools for students identified as gifted and/or talented. Inquiry into the sociocultural aspects of specialized education for gifted and talented students demonstrate how such programming perpetuates systems of inequity (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009; Gaztambide-Fernández, Saifer, & Desai, 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández, VanderDussen, & Cairns, 2014). Gaztambide-Fernández, Saifer, & Desai (2013) show how "social class and cultural advantage are often misrecognized as talent" (p. 125) and that specialized arts programs for gifted and talented-identified students are complicit in mechanisms by which educational segregation and inequity are maintained. In

addition, Gaztambide-Fernández, VanderDussen, and Cairns (2014) explore how "possible futures emerge through the interplay of schooling, social class, and subjectivity formation" (p. 110) in specialized arts schools and arts magnet schools. By studying the experiences of artistic elites in New Orleans, I learned about how structures of power within the arts, particularly race and class, work to reinforce in(equity) in arts education in the city and beyond.

When Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent levee breaches devastated the city of New Orleans on August 29, 2005, the world watched as the city and surrounding region were met with countless tragedies (Brinkley, 2007; Dyson, 2006; Horne, 2006). In addition to the trauma of the storm, reporting by the news media presented the mostly poor and mostly Black people who sought shelter at the "refuges of last resort" (Duncan, 2006, para. 14) of the Superdome and the Convention Center as "depraved" (King, 2011, p. 343) and thus undeserving of empathy (Dyson, 2006). Hence, there has been a great discrepancy between the portrayal of Black and White storm victims in the media and in everyday discourse. One of the most well-documented instances of this was in a pair of photographs published together: one of a Black man who was carrying a case of soda and a plastic bag described as having just finished "looting a grocery store" (Ralli, 2005, para. 2) and another of a White man and woman holding bags of food who are depicted as "finding bread and soda from a local grocery store" (Ralli, 2005, para. 3). Such imagery and discourses surrounding supposed looting, rapes, murders, and suicides that happened in the aftermath of Katrina are a demonstration of this fantastical and false media reporting—much of which was later discredited, but at the time, was widely circulated (Buras, 2015; Burnett, 2015; King, 2011). It has been a little over ten years since Katrina now, and many contend that New Orleans has been largely restored and the city has been lauded for its efforts towards revitalization. Nonetheless, the racial, economic, and educational inequality that

plagued the city before and during the storm remains firmly in place in the post-Katrina period (Hawkins, 2009) and recent studies have shown that perceptions about whether the city has truly recovered vary greatly along racial lines, with White people and others with privilege much more likely to believe that the city has fully recovered than Black people (Corley, 2015).

A central site of racial injustice, erasure, and silencing in the post-Katrina context is the New Orleans public educational landscape. Over the past several years, struggles for educational justice have played out strikingly in post-Katrina New Orleans. These efforts continue to define the city's educational terrain as it has transformed into an almost entirely charter school system (Buras, Randels, & Salaam, 2010; Buras, 2011; Buras, 2015; Saulny, 2006; Sims & Rossmeier, 2015). Charter schools have become increasingly common throughout the United States and the New Orleans situation has been cast as a charter school test case for the rest of the nation (Buras, 2015). The educational situation in New Orleans provokes reflection upon the implications of increased neoliberal reform of schools across the United States, as well as internationally. These changes have been both celebrated and castigated by various political and educational leaders. For instance, former U.S. Education Secretary, Arne Duncan said, "the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina" (Anderson, 2010, para. 1). Former Tulane University president, Scott Cowen, echoed those sentiments and lauded the efforts of the charter school overhaul of the city's public education system, stating that, "Prior to Katrina, we had one of the worst school systems in the country" and that "Katrina allowed us to start with a clean sheet of paper, so out of a great tragedy came a great opportunity" (Schachter, 2006, para. 1). Although there have been some positive changes for students in terms of academic achievement since Katrina (Public Impact & New Schools for New Orleans, 2015; Sims & Rossmeier, 2015), the charter school changes are presented as if they are designed to

usher in a new era of school reform that increases access to educational equity. Yet the status quo has remained solidly in place in New Orleans with schools just as racially and economically segregated as they were pre-Katrina (Weixler, Barrett, & Harris, 2017).

While Katrina is a central focus of nearly all recent narratives related to the city, legacies of social, educational, and economic injustice in New Orleans extend beyond the circumstances of Katrina (Kidron, 2004; King, 2011). Education in the United States has, since its inception, been a landscape of struggle where race, class, gender, and other markers of identity have been key points of contention (Rury, 2013; Urban & Wagoner, 2013). Throughout its history, New Orleans has been emblematic of such strivings for educational equity (Baker, 1996; Bankston & Caldas, 2002; Buras, 2015). At various points in time, New Orleans served as a site of contentious battles in struggles for educational justice. For instance, New Orleans was the site of the landmark court decision of Plessy v. Ferguson that ushered in the Jim Crow laws and "separate but equal" policies that were utilized to justify school segregation in the early-mid-20th century (Baker, 1996). New Orleans was also the setting for the first integration of a public elementary school in the Deep South since Reconstruction when, in 1960, Ruby Bridges began attending William Frantz Elementary School and three other Black girls—Tessie Provost, Gail Etienne, and Leona Tate—began attending McDonogh 19 Elementary School (Baker, 1996; Bankston & Caldas, 2002; Bridges, 1999).

As *de jure* segregation ended in Louisiana, many White and/or middle-class families with children either left the city of New Orleans for the surrounding suburbs or enrolled in private schools within the city (Bankston & Caldas, 2002) with approximately 22% of all children in New Orleans and most White students attending private schools in 2017 (Weixler, Barrett, & Harris, 2017). Many of the participants in this research study attended private schools, and those

who were a part of the public education system attended highly selective elite public schools. During the 2004-05 school year, the year before Katrina, the racial demographics of New Orleans public schools were as follows: 93.2% African American, 3.6% White, and 1.2% Hispanic, and 1.9% Asian and during the 2014-15 school year, public school populations were 84.2% African American, 7.2% White, and 5.1% Hispanic, and 1.6% Asian (Sims & Rossmeier, 2015). During the 2014-15 school year, 46,500 were enrolled in New Orleans public schools, reflecting a decline in numbers since pre-Katrina, when there were approximately 65,000 students enrolled (Dreillinger, 2015). By the 2014-15 school year, 91% of New Orleans public schools were charters (Sims & Rossmeier, 2015). The public schools that were considered "good schools," code for "White schools," although they are also now charter schools, remain intact in their high status while the schools that were deemed "bad schools," code for "Black schools," also maintain their status. Hence, the charter school system has reinforced pre-existing social hierarchies within the New Orleans public school landscape all while nearly eliminating the teaching corps that existed pre-Katrina with the firing of all teachers, three-quarters of whom were Black women (Buras, 2015; Lincove, Barrett, & Strunk, 2017). Hence, many have deemed this school system overhaul a precarious "experiment" that is less in the interest of educational equity and more for the benefit of corporate charter school networks (Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015). Such critics have lamented the increased privatization of New Orleans public education and linked the charter school movement to colonization and neoliberalism: an exploitative takeover of contested spaces (Buras, 2011; Buras, 2015; Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015; Fabricant & Fine, 2013; Pérez, 2009; Pérez & Cannella, 2010). While there have been a few research investigations into the experiences of students, teachers, and administrators within post-Katrina New Orleans educational contexts (e.g., Carr, 2013; Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015) and

even fewer studies related to art education in post-Katrina New Orleans. One exception to this is Kee (2016) who examines "art making as identity work" (p. 6) in a study involving youth involved in an arts education program at the Ashé Cultural Arts Center in New Orleans. Yet, more research into the complex realities of life for young people in post-Katrina New Orleans is warranted.

Central Research Questions

This research asks four interrelated questions. Through the lens of a teen arts internship at a contemporary arts center in post-Katrina New Orleans, 1) How do contextual figured worlds influence artist identity work? 2) How does artist identity work manifest through personal narratives? 3) How does artist identity work manifest in activities? 4) What are the consequences of artist identity work?

Central Research Problem

There is a need for increased understanding of how sociocultural factors influence identification with the visual arts in young people. One of the fundamental questions for the field of art education concerns the "purposes of art education" (Bolin & Hoskings, 2013, p. 62). The purposes of art education have long been contentious within the field **(**Congdon, Hicks, Bolin, & Blandy, 2008; Bolin & Hoskings, 2013; Efland, 1990; Siegesmund, 1998). Most responses to "what is the purpose of art education?" serve as advocacy arguments that justify the importance of art education, solidifying its purposes through the positive outcomes it yields. One of these longstanding purposes of art education has been that art education is a training ground where students learn "to think and work like an artist" (Bolin & Hoskings, 2013, p. 63)

with the goal of fostering "studio habits of mind" (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007, p. 33). Hence, if a key purpose of art education is to prepare young people to become artists, it is important to consider whether this path is equitably available to all. Further, the field of art education does not often take a close examination of this notion of "the artist," nor how art educators contribute to the formation of particular kinds of artists who create art in particular ways and for particular purposes. These notions of "the arts" and "the artist" are rooted in histories deeply intertwined with racism and colonization (Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, & Carpenter, 2018; Travis & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2018). Hence, it is imperative to expand the notion of what constitutes an "artist" beyond the archetype of the eccentric, isolated genius who is most often conceptualized in the image of whiteness and maleness (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013; Soussloff, 1997).

The study of patterns and processes involved in children's artistic development is a foundational tenet of art education as an academic field. However, models that explain children's artistic development are generally rooted in child and adolescent psychology and tend to be focused on modernist definitions of art and very specific measures of artistic achievement such as realistic drawing skills (i.e., Day & Hurwitz, 2012; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1982;). While these models of artistic development allow for the potentiality for the development of an artist identity, they do not fully acknowledge the influence of sociocultural factors on the development of an artist identity and, with few exceptions (e.g. Stokrocki, 2010), are focused on young children rather than adolescents. There has been some research into other influences on child and adolescent development in art, such as visual culture (Wilson, 1974, 1976, 2003, 2005, 2008), and children's "drawing as a sociocultural practice" (Ivashkevich, 2009). Nonetheless, with few exceptions (e.g., Cosier, 2011; López, 2009), there has been limited inquiry into the

influences of sociocultural factors upon artist identity development that extends beyond the products and practices of artmaking and examines the surrounding situational factors and experiences that influence identity formation in art education contexts.

One key exception to this lack of inquiry into the sociocultural influences on artist identity formation is Charland's (2010) study. Charland inquired into reasons why middle-class African American youth choose not to become involved in the visual arts. Charland found that many Black students sought to avoid identification with the visual arts for the following reasons: a) negative or lacking childhood art experiences, b) stereotypical views about artists that correlated with stereotypical views about Black people, c) not seeing financial benefit to becoming an artist as a career, and d) a sense of fear of rejection associated with disclosing personal aspects of themselves through art. My dissertation aligns with many of the ideas explored in Charland's study because my research also seeks to illuminate some of the ways in which identity markers such as race, class, and gender are intertwined with artistic identity formation in young people. In contrast with Charland's study, I seek to work with research participants who have adopted identities that are aligned with the visual arts rather than those who reject such identification. The young people in my study have been actively recruited into the world of visual art education. Some appear to be orientated (Ahmed, 2008) toward artist identities that are aligned with dominant notions of the visual arts, while others are not.

The dissertation also addresses gaps in the literature on arts equity (Kraehe, 2017; Kraehe et al., 2016). For instance, my study illustrates how the development of artists in educational contexts is often preceded by institutional actors identifying particular students as "artistic" or "talented in the arts." This sets up a tracking system where equitable access to arts education and an artist identity is tied to racial and class-based privilege (Gaztambide-Fernández, Saifer, &

Desai, 2013; Kraehe, 2017). When artistic talent is viewed as an inherent identity characteristic rather than a socially constructed one, it limits access to the development of artist identities to the few. This rarefication of artist identities places limitations on who can access an artist identity, but also circumscribes who an artist is and even what art is. Narrow conceptualizations reinforce mythologies around the arts as "white property" belonging to the creative, individualist, genius artist who is historically framed as a White male (Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, & Carpenter, 2018; see also Harris, 1995). This imagined vision of who an artist is or should be is restrictive and may lead to artist "identity foreclosure" (Charland, 2010; Marcia, 1966; Rolling & Bey, 2016) or a dismissal or a giving up of an artist identity before fully exploring the possibility that one could adopt or adapt such an identity.

There is much theorizing about identity from many different perspectives yet there is not much theorizing about artist identity formation. Many different discourses circulate about what it is to be an artist (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008). These conceptualizations of "the arts" and "artists" solidify the idea that "the arts" are the purview of the elite and the so-called talented perpetuating exclusion of others. As Gaztambide-Fernández (2008) points out, there is extensive instructional material in how to teach art and how to train artists in the techniques of their artistic media, but "there is little theoretical or empirical work addressing the educational experiences of young students in the arts" (p. 235) in relation to these discourses on what it means to be an artist. Gaztambide-Fernández (2008) thus recommends that there be more research into the experiences of artist identity formation in youth, stating:

> This research might consider, for instance, how young artists construct their own ideas about what it means to be an artist and of their own social roles and responsibilities. Different educational contexts and experiences likely shape the meaning students make of their identifications as artists and of their roles as cultural workers differently, and these processes are likely to be greatly influenced by dynamics of race, class, gender, and sexuality in complicated ways. (p. 252)

In this research, I seek to do just this—to examine the experiences of young people who identify as artists as they engage in an internship specifically designed to help them explore themselves in this role, as they consider how and why they create art, and experiment with the implications of being artists and creating art.

The possibility of claiming an artist identity is an issue of arts education equity. Using Kraehe's (2017) lens for a multidimensional understanding of equity in arts education, Kraehe, Acuff, and Travis (2016) reviewed numerous studies that could be characterized as addressing specific dimensions of arts education equity: distribution, access, participation, effects, recognition, and transformation. Hence it is imperative to view arts education equity through a multidimensional lens where equity is about more than simple access to art education but extends to include factors such as recognition and transformation (Kraehe, 2017; Kraehe et al., 2016). When students do not have equitable opportunities for quality art education and if they do not see a diversity of cultural practices presented as "art," they are less likely to embrace an artist identity. Thus, in order to understand arts equity and inequity, it is important to consider how particular purposes of art education influence the nature of the burgeoning artist identities of young artists and whether these artist identities serve to maintain or disrupt the status quo. Through inquiry into the contexts, narrative and activity-based practices, and consequences of artist-identity work among youth, this study investigates the 1) knowledge gaps around the sociocultural nature of artist identity formation and (2) the ways in which the processes of identification contribute to arts inequities.

Significance and Limitations of the Study

The study is significant in light of the increased attention to equity and social justice in national arts organizations, art museums, and public schools. The intensive personal and social activist stance of the internship program focused on in this study offers opportunities for reflection upon the processes of artist identity work in educational settings for young people. In addition, the findings of this study provoke us to consider ways to expand equitable access to arts education programming. This study also contributes to the field's enduring preoccupation with mapping out children's development in art. In particular, I demonstrate how contexts influence artist identity formation in young people, the ways in which young people negotiate artist identity, and the outcomes of artist identity formation for young people. Since this is a small-scale qualitative study, the results of this research do not necessarily offer generalizable information applicable to all young artists or all contexts of arts education. This study focuses specifically on understanding the experiences of students who identify with the visual arts and does not claim to attend to the broader experiences of young people in New Orleans. Nonetheless, this investigation contributes to both local and national conversations on equity and arts education.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIZING IDENTITY

The field of art education has had a longstanding fascination with the concept of identity, yet there is very little empirical research into identity and art education. Further, even as social justice art education heavily invokes the term *identity* in relation to concepts such as *empowerment*, *agency*, *self-reflection*, and *transformation*, there is scant literature that critically examines this "transformative" narrative in art education from the perspective of the presumed beneficiaries. Moreover, the field of art education has not contended with identity in ways that fully acknowledge the complexities of identity formation, especially how sociocultural identity intersects with artist identity. In this chapter, I offer the theoretical framework for understanding identity that I used in my study. I begin by explaining identity paradigms in a general sense. Then, I examine how identity has been conceptualized in art education. Finally, I discuss how I conceptualized identity within this dissertation using social practice theory.

Identity Paradigms

Conceptualizations of identity and identity formation vary among different paradigmatic views and academic disciplines. There are longstanding debates over "the universal self versus the culturally specific self" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 20), with psychologists generally leaning towards a universalist view and anthropologists viewing the self as more culturally constructed. In this study of artist identity formation, I use social practice theory because it addresses for the structural understandings of identity, while also emphasizing the ways in which individuals exercise agency as they construct and enact identities in practice through interaction with others, with the use of narratives and artifacts (Holland et al., 1998). Before discussing social practice

theory in depth, I provide a brief overview of identity paradigms. This overview is necessary in order to show how my theoretical framework accounts for the criticisms leveled at identity research.

Different ways of understanding identity are paradigmatic, meaning one's conceptualization of identity depends upon how one's worldview is situated, including one's understanding of the nature of being (ontology) and one's perspective on the nature of knowledge (epistemology) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Sipe & Constable, 1996). An essentialist view of identity is one that supposes that identities are stable and fixed (Calhoun, 1994). A constructivist perspective views identity as entirely socially constructed (Hall, 2000). A critical perspective draws upon both essentialism and constructivism in that it views identity as socially constructed, but also socially consequential and works to alleviate identity-related discrimination and injustice (Moya, 2000). A deconstructionist perspective works from a view that identity is always relative and unfixed—deconstructionists work to completely dismantle or put under erasure fixed notions of identity (Hall, 2000).

Essentialist Identity Paradigm

An essentialist view of identity lies within a positivist view of the world. Behaviorist and developmental identity theories fall into this category. While essentialist views of identity did not emanate with modernism, this perspective on identity is congruous with modernist ideas such as individualism (Calhoun, 1994). Essentialist identities are categorical and designated as hierarchical binaries such as White/Black and male/female. With the advent of poststructuralism, postmodernism, deconstructionism critical race theory, and intersectional feminist and womanist theory, there has been great resistance to essentialist, fixed notions of

identity. However, even though identity characterizations warrant deconstruction, essentialist understandings of identity continue to impact lived experiences (Alcoff, 1988, 1998, 2000, 2006). In other words, identities are never fixed, and they are always multifaceted, but they become "durable" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 271) because of their social meanings and because they have material effects on peoples' lives.

Deconstructionist Identity Paradigm

Deconstructionist perspectives on identity critique essentialist perspectives and offer new ways to understand the existing constructs that we have for identities (Hall, 2000). Deconstructionist thinkers, following Derrida (1967/1997), contend that identity cannot be described in fixed terms because identity is never stable and that all identity constructs are problematic. For instance, Foucault conceptualizes identities as formulated entirely through discourses and Butler (1990, 1993), while acknowledging the relevance of bodily materiality, asserts that identities are performative. These conflicting views of identity represent a paradigmatic dilemma between essentialist and deconstructionist understandings and offer opportunities for the forging of new ways of viewing selves and subjectivity (Mansfield, 2000).

Social Constructivist Identity Paradigm

Social constructivists assert that "selves are socially constructed through the mediation of powerful discourses and their artifacts" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 26). This conceptualization of the self resists essentialism, but also rejects the complete deconstruction of identity. Similarly, Hall (2000) describes identification as a process, influenced by multiple social factors, stating:

> I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate,' speak to use or hail us

> into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken.' Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. (p. 19)

From a social constructivist perspective, Hall thus contends that identities are constructed through both discourses and practices through a range of complex social interactions.

Critical Identity Paradigm

Critical perspectives on identity involve the reclaiming of modified versions of essentialist identities by people who have been historically marginalized. Feminist theory, queer theory, and critical race theory all draw upon understandings of identity as socially constructed, yet they also mobilize some form of essentialism. This *strategic essentialism*, a term first deployed by Spivak (1985/2006) to describe "strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (p. 13), can be part of social justice efforts (Alcoff, 2006; Anzaldúa, 1987/2007; Collins, 2000/2009; Irigaray (1984/1993), Williams, 1991). Hence, although essentialist understandings of identity are problematic and have led to critiques of "identity politics," they can be useful in efforts to mobilize people around civil rights and social justice concerns (Bernstein, 2005). Alcoff (2006) answers the critics of identity politics with a recognition of the importance of how identities are "marked" on bodies:

> The reality of identities often comes from the fact that they are visibly marked on the body itself, guiding if not determining the way we perceive and judge others and are perceived and judged by them. The road to freedom from the capriciousness of arbitrary identity designations lies not, as some class reductionists and postmodernists argue, in the attempt at a speedy dissolution of identity—a proposal that all too often conceals a willful ignorance about the real-world effects of identity—but through a careful exploration of identity, which can reveal its influence on what we can see and know, as well as its context dependence and its complex and fluid nature. (p. 5)

Here, Alcoff, from a feminist metaphysical perspective, emphasizes that identities matter not only because of their social and political implications, but also because they are inscribed into people's embodied lives. Alcoff thus contends that the importance of identities lies in the ways in which they impact lived experiences as well as their social and political implications. Anzaldúa (1987/2007) describes this complexity around the naming of shared identities: "Now that we had a name, some of the fragmented pieces began to fall together—who we were, what we were, how we had evolved. We began to get glimpses of what we might eventually become" (p. 85). Anzaldúa, referring specifically to Chicana identity, highlights how the naming can create solidarity amongst people with shared identities and her words illuminate how identities shift over time, simultaneously referencing past, present, and future.

Identity Discourses in Art Education

There are many ways in which identity is conceptualized in art education. In this section, I offer the following ways of discussing identity within the field: Identity as Portrait, Identity as Empowerment, and Identity as Formative Process. First, I discuss the central role that the portrait has played in art education. Second, I examine literature on how the exploration of identity in art education has been tied to the work of emancipation. Third, I describe identity as a formative process.

Identity as Portrait

Portrayals of artists are part of an established tradition in the history of art. Artist portraits take both written and visual form (Soussloff, 1997, 2006). Portraits, in particular self-portraits, are ubiquitous in art classrooms as well, yet portrait-making as a methodology has received little

attention by art education researchers. What might we learn by exploring artists' methodologies of portrait-making or portraiture? For example, modern artists like Vincent van Gogh and Pablo Picasso explored portraiture in ways that were not merely about attempts at physical realism nor about the representation of stylized conventions. Rather, they represented the personalities and the inner-workings of the minds of their subjects (West, 2004). Although modern art represented a break from the attempts of physically realistic renderings of the previous eras in the history of art, when one looks back further into art history, it is evident that the rendering of portraits always involved the depiction and representation of much more than physical reality. In ancient Greek or Egyptian art, portraits were created of kings, queens, gods, and goddesses, but also occasionally, the everyday person. The purposes for creating such portraits were varied—to reinforce power of those being portrayed and/or for religious, devotional reasons (Stokstad & Cothren, 2014). The purposes for the creation of portraits has always been myriad and complex, informed by sociocultural forces. Relations of power and issues of representation come into play within the creation of a portrait (Hall, 1997).

Several contemporary artists utilize the genre of portraiture to make critical commentary on traditional notions of the portrait and to represent individuals who belong to historically marginalized populations. For instance, Kehinde Wiley creates portraits of contemporary African American men and women through postures, attire, and backgrounds that reference European portraiture traditions (Kehinde Wiley, n.d.). Zanele Muholi creates photographic portraits of members of the Black LGBTQ+ community in South Africa (Stevenson, n.d.). Another example is Cindy Sherman who, through her depiction of herself dressed as a variety of "characters," disrupts the division between self and other in her portrait-making while also disrupting the power dynamics associated with the male gaze (Sherman, Respini, Burton, &

Waters, 2012). Pepón Osorio's work also interrupts the traditional notion of portraiture as a picture of a person by creating installations as portraits addressing the themes of home and his Puerto Rican identity (Art 21, n.d.). In contemporary art, for every notion of portraiture, it seems there is an artist who has attempted to thwart, destabilize, and call into question the very idea of a portrait. All the artists mentioned here address identity and representation in terms of gender, race, and/or sexuality, and most interact with their subjects (or themselves) in innovative ways.

While not all artists are portraitists, it is important to consider the status of the portrait within the art world and particularly within art education. In art education settings, creating self-portraits and other self-oriented artwork is often understood as a means of discovering, exploring, or expressing aspects of identity (e.g., Gerety & Adam, 2003; Prater & Smith, 2015; Zoss, Smagorinsky, and O'Donnell-Allen, 2007). At some point in their education, most art students are asked to create a self-portrait. It is often a rite of passage for a young artist to create a self-portrait. Further, art students are often asked to explore or draw from aspects of their identities within their artwork. So, while there remains the standard observational self-portrait, there is also often an assignment where students are asked to create collages both physical and virtual that are representative of themselves. One could also argue that social media offers an opportunity for the creation of a self-portrait and for the gazing at the portraits of others. Hence, we can more literally apply the methodologies of portrait artists to a research context. In this study, I take an approach to portraiture that is both metaphorical and literal, examining the ways in which young people create portraits of themselves as artists through artifacts, narratives, and practices.

Identity as Empowerment Tool

With some exceptions (e.g., Atkinson, 2012), throughout much of the literature on art education, there are assertions that artmaking is an inherently liberating practice and that art education serves to provide avenues by which students can experience agency. This is evident throughout several art education movements: from child-centered approaches to social justice art education (Efland, 1990; Stankiewicz, 2001). Art education has claimed emancipatory possibilities within art creation, with benefit to individuals of marginalized identities. The assumption is that engagement with the arts is an avenue towards emancipation. Further, art education scholars and practitioners often purport that the creation of art aids students in the development and expression of identities (e.g., Sweeny, 2009). The arts are often considered to be liberatory avenues for free expression and identity development. Proponents of social justice-oriented art education have claimed agentic possibilities within art creation for individuals of marginalized identities (e.g., Rolling, 2009, 2011, 2012; Pennisi, 2013).

Social justice is a current discourse within the field of art education that is attempting to say something about issues of inequality. There have been notable critiques of the claims of critical pedagogy (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; hooks, 1994) that could be extended to social justice art education as well. For instance, social justice art education scholarship has often claimed that, through individual transformative art learning experiences, students gain a sense of empowerment that ultimately shapes social change in a broader sense. For instance, some art educators have described increased "agency" (Pennisi, 2013; Rolling, 2011;), "empowerment" (Hicks, 1990), "emancipation" (Trafí-Prats, 2012), and "democracy" (Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Dewey, 1934; Freedman, 2000; Gude, 2009) for participants in social justice-oriented art education. Most empirical studies within the field of art education that claim to exemplify

"social justice art education" provide very self-assured results that solidify the notion that providing empowering art-making opportunities for marginalized students is intrinsically liberating, even as they fail to demonstrate how students experience these "interventions" (e.g., Dewhurst, 2011; Shin, 2011; Sickler-Vogt, 2006).

Identity as Formative Process

In education, cognitive psychology has been influential in presenting theories of identity development (Erikson, 1959; Piaget, 1936; Marcia, 1966). When artistic identity development has been considered in education, typically it also has been through a developmental perspective rooted in child and adolescent psychology as sequential processes (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1982; Day & Hurwitz, 2012). By contrast, sociocultural perspectives on identity formation contend that identities are non-linear and shaped by practices, narratives, artifacts, social positioning, and other factors not readily delineated in sequential categories (Holland et al., 1998). With increasing awareness of the way visual culture influences the development of young artists, researchers investigated the influences of visual culture on artistic development (e.g., Wilson, 1974, 1976, 2003, 2005, 2008). Other researchers have examined sociocultural influences on artistic development. Rolling (2009, 2011, 2012) and Rolling & Bey (2016) employed narrative forms of inquiry and autoethnography to examine their experiences as Black male artists and art educators. And others have connected art education, identity, and place (Bey, 2012; Powell, 2008). López (2009) researched the experiences of dual-culture students within art education contexts and connected this work to her own experiences as an artist and art educator. Charland (2010), examined the rejection of an artist identity through the perspectives of a group of middle class Black youth. My study builds upon the work of these scholars by examining the ways in

which factors such as race, class, and place influence identity formation in young people involved in the arts.

Identities are formed, and agency is both asserted and thwarted at sites of education. One learns to become a "'certain kind of person'" (Gee, 2000-01, p. 25) within educational contexts. Here, the same structures that limit one's agency, also function as restrictions on what "kind of person" one can become. In viewing "schooling as a site of identity formation" (Nygreen, 2013, p. 9), it is evident that the narratives, artifacts, and practices of schools are utilized by the key educational players: teachers, parents, and students to construct different "kinds of people." It is here where students are categorized by levels of academic achievement in specific subject areas or by their special interests in areas such as the visual arts or music or sports. Through these figured worlds, teachers, parents, and students construct ideas about what makes a student "smart," (Hatt, 2012), a "good student" (Wortham, 2004), or good at math (Boaler and Greeno, 2000). On one hand, if positive, these identifications can be beneficial to students. On the other hand, these identity labels can reinforce internalized oppression that places limitations on students and hinders the fulfillment of their potential.

Sites of education also work to solidify identifications by race, class, gender, sexuality, and other sociocultural factors. These sociocultural identifications influence other aspects of who students become within and beyond school. Educational settings are also sites where identities tied to race, class, gender, sexuality, and other factors become solidified. Schools are often sites where students are characterized through stereotypes associated with these sociocultural markers, with teachers and students using labels such as "those loud Black girls" and "those quiet Asian boys" (Lei, 2003) or "ghetto" (Leander, 2002) to describe students. And while students are constrained within the limitations that society has placed upon them, they also

have agency within "spaces of authoring." For example, Calabrese Barton et al. (2013) examined the experiences of middle school girls of color in the figured worlds of science classes in terms of their conceptualizations of their "past, present, and possible futures" (p. 41) in relation to science. Calabrese Barton et al. (2013) found that agency comes into consideration in these identifications as students negotiate and make choices about their identities, but they are always constrained by sociocultural factors such as race, class, and gender.

Social Practice Theory of Identity and Agency

To understand how identities are formed and expressed in real-world contexts, a more nuanced approach is needed, one that acknowledges the tensions between essentialist, deconstructionist, constructivist, and critical understandings of identity. Social practice theory considers how identities are developed and mobilized within practices both personal and social (Holland et al., 1998). A practice orientation to understanding identity helps make evident how artist identities are formed and expressed within intersecting contextual figured worlds. Though identity is ever-shifting based upon situational factors, Holland and Lave (2001) describe a "thickening" of identities as they become reiterated over time through social practices. Relatedly, Hall (2000) talks about "identification" rather than "identity" as a way to highlight the processual nature of the formation of the self in relation to discourses and practices:

> Identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. In contrast with the 'naturalism' of this definition, the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed—always 'in process.' (p. 6)

According to social practice theory, social identity positions interact within narratives and artifacts in ongoing processes. Within social worlds, material and discursive aspects interact with social positioning to create meaning.

Identity in Figured Worlds

Identities are always situated. Holland et al. (1998) use the term *figured world* to describe culturally specific contexts in which identifications are situated and given meaning. They define a figured world as "a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52). Within figured worlds, identities act as "the imaginings of self in worlds of action" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5). Through participation in figured worlds, identities are developed and enacted as people define themselves, are defined by others, and seek to reinforce these identities through lived practices. Holland et al. (1998) emphasize the embodied and sociohistorically embedded nature of figured worlds:

> These collective "as if" worlds are sociohistoric, contrived interpretations or imaginations that mediate behavior and so, from the perspective of heuristic development, inform participants' outlooks. The ability to sense (see, hear, touch, taste, feel) the figured world becomes embodied over time, through continual participation. (p. 52-53)

The ideational and bodily constructions of identity are two interdependent aspects of personhood. They form around the artifacts, narratives, and practices that exist within figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998). As people develop identities, they are always involved in multiple figured worlds, negotiating multiple aspects of their identities simultaneously. In this investigation, I examined the figured worlds of adolescents who identify with the visual arts. I acknowledge that the lives and identities of my research participants were informed by a range of

figured worlds, such as that of home or community and that of New Orleans itself, where pre- and post-Katrina exist as figured worlds of their own.

I contend that identities are not purely essential, nor purely constructed, but, rather, a complex combination of these extremes. Although social categories associated with identity, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, are socially constructed (Haney López, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1986), performative (Butler, 1990, 1993), and fluid (Hall, 2003), they have tangible implications in terms of educational and social inequity. Holland et al. (1998) acknowledge "social categories . . . have meaning across many figured worlds. These categories are by and large associated with the major social divisions—gender, class, race, ethnicity—that separate those who are routinely privileged from those who are not" (p. 130). In this study, I tried to understand how social categories influenced participants' identifications with the visual arts. This identification process involved both individual and social narratives about the identity work involved in becoming an artist.

Positional Identities and Figurative Identities in Figured Worlds

Within figured worlds, people develop identities as part of their enculturation into such worlds. By adopting the modes of expression and interaction of a figured world, people within figured worlds develop both positional and figurative identities. In my research, I found that positional identities and figurative identities were an important part of artistic identity development.

Positional identities, also known as relational identities, "have to do with how one identifies one's position relative to others" (Holland, 1998, p. 127). Positional identities are informed by social categories of identity, such as race, class, and gender, that are imbued with

social meaning in a range of different situations or figured worlds. According to Holland et al. (1998) "positional identities have to do with the day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance—with the social-interactional, social-relational structures of the lived world" (p. 127). These positional identities tend to locate people within relations of relative power or disempowerment in societies, as Holland et al. describe: "depending on the others present, of her greater or lesser access to spaces, activities, genres, and through those genres, authoritative voices or no voices at all" (p. 127). In other words, positional identities first shape a person's recruitment and acceptance into the figured world of the arts and followed by that person's role and status within the figured world. Positional identities also influence a person's exclusion from the figured world.

Figurative identities, on the other hand, are informed by the lived practices of identities and Holland et al. (1998) describe figurative identities, also known as narrativized identities as being shaped by "the stories, acts, and characters that make the world a cultural world" (p. 127). This storytelling about social practices and social positionings can place imagined limitations on individuals associated with their relational or positional identities.

However, figured worlds are "as if" worlds where figurative identities are "as if" identities, where new possibilities for shaping the self are fashioned. According to Holland et al. (1998), "the 'metapragmatic' capability to figure social practice—through narrative, drawing, singing, and other means of articulation—is at the same time a capability to figure it otherwise than it is" (p. 143). It is within these figurative identities where agency to transgress the status quo is possible.

Hence, following a social practice theory of identity, even though identities are personal and housed within individual bodies and lives, they are also developed in social, cultural,

historical and other contexts. Identities are relational, and the formation of an identity as an artist happens within an individual who always exists in relation to social, cultural, and historical contexts. Both imagined and real, these contexts or worlds inform the possibilities and limitations on the adoption of identities.

Identity-positioning institutional structures are built into social worlds such as schools where students are oriented away, towards, or around specific identities (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Hatt, 2012; Leander, 2002; Lei, 2003; Wortham, 2004). Tracking is one common structure of institutionalized identity solidification that promotes inequitable identity positioning within schools. Like in other subject areas, within art education, students are tracked into various programming with varying degrees of prestige, including Gifted and Talented programs, Advanced Placement courses, and specialized college preparatory arts schools (Gaztambide-Fernández, VanderDussen, & Cairns, 2014). Within the figured world of education, tracking is one means by which "to orient students toward their future figured worlds" (Luttrell & Parker, 2001, p. 241), shaping career and social goals in students.

In a study of literacy among teens, Luttrell & Parker (2001) found that despite restrictions imposed by tracking, many students established their own literacy practices outside of school. These literacy practices were often key components of students' identities. Many students who had been classified as low-achievers in school literacy courses were, outside of school, highly invested in literary practices such as reading and writing, and despite school limitations, they maintained literary identities. Although schools frame a "sense of who [students] are and who they will become" (Luttrell & Parker, 2001, p. 242), students may frame their own sense of present and future identities. Tracking functions as a form of systemic discrimination, sanctioned by structures like schools.

Narratives, Artifacts, and Activities of Identity Work in Figured Worlds

Because identities are constantly re-negotiated and ever-evolving, in this study, I use the term *identity work* (Calabrese Barton et al., 2013; Holland et al., 1998; Holland & Lave, 2001) to discuss identity formation in youth. Identity work is a series of practices that happen in certain contexts and have certain consequences. It suggests that identity is more like a verb than a noun. Identity is "something people *do*, rather than something people *are* or something people *have*" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009, p. 12). Calabrese Barton et al. (2012) describe identity work as:

> the actions that individuals take and the relationships they form (and the resources they leverage to do so) at any given moment and as constrained by the historically, culturally, and socially legitimized norms, rules, and expectations that operate within the spaces in which such work takes place. (p. 38)

Herein, it is evident that the activities of identity work function in concert with the historical, cultural, and social contexts within which this identity work takes place.

Identity work in the figured world of art education includes teaching and learning about art history and artmaking processes, artmaking (Kee, 2016), discussing and critiquing art, and learning how to market oneself as an artist. Each of these kinds of identity work are made possible through particular art education *narratives*, *artifacts*, and *activities* that serve as the cultural tools through which artist identities are formed.

Identity and Embodied Narratives in Figured Worlds

Narratives are a key method by which identities are created and solidified within social worlds. Narrative conceptualizations of identity, where identities are said to be formed through narratives offer a counterpoint to essentialist as well as deconstructionist notions of identity. As Holland et al. (1998) write, "the personal story is a cultural vehicle for identity formation" (p. 71). Through narrative depictions of identity experiences, agency and limitations on agency are

described and enacted. As Sfard & Prusak (2005) state, "with the narrative definition, human agency and the dynamic nature of identity are brought to the fore" (p. 17). There are problems with a purely narrative understanding of identity, of course. Narratives are constructed within the sociocultural limitations and are impossible to isolate from the conditions within which they appear. And, although narratives can manifest outside of language, through the visual or through the embodied, they still are rendered mostly in the form of words.

Following Holland et al. (1998), Wortham (2004) uses social practice theory and narratives to analyze a shift "from typical girl to disruptive outcast" (p. 171) in one student's identification by self and others. These identity narratives were not merely individual but were a part of broader discriminatory racialized and gendered discourses. Throughout the course of his study, there were fluctuations in how the student of focus was viewed as "being assertive in the good sense to assertive in the bad sense" (p. 168) and how others' perceptions of her were influenced by racist and sexist discourses about Black women. Wortham shows how identities are at ever-shifting both individually and socially in that both the student, her peers, and her teachers continually revised their narrative characterizations of her. Somers and Gibson (1994) argue that "social life is itself *storied* and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*" (p. 38-39). Following Somers and Gibson, I, too, in this dissertation interpreted participants' self-narratives as always interacting with broader sociocultural discourses in the construction of an artist identity.

Narrative recurs throughout discourses on identity as it is a central tool by which to make sense of one's experiences and to articulate relationships with others. Narratives are stories that manifest in various forms—written, spoken and unspoken, expressed through art, and lived through the body (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narratives are often told by individuals, yet they are

also inherently social, cultural, and political (Czarniawska, 2004). Narratives can be understood both as a means by which to make sense of life, but also as an ontological aspect of being human (Adams, 2008). For instance, in describing narratives as ways to interpret life, Bochner (1994) defines narratives as "stories people tell about their lives" (p. 30) and Richardson (1990) states that "people make sense of their lives through the stories that are available to them, and they attempt to fit their lives into the available stories" (p. 129). Others have viewed narratives as intrinsic characteristics of being human (Barthes, 1977; Bruner, 1987; Fisher, 1984). Although postmodernist thought has disrupted the supremacy of master narratives (Lyotard, 1979/1984), broad narratives continue to shape identity formation.

Narratives are a rich source by which to explore both personal and political concerns surrounding identity. Narratives mediate understandings of the world and the way in which one describes their experiences of the world. In turn, these factors shape identities. Identities are a combination of different facets of how one views themselves, how one interacts with others, and how one is viewed by others and how these views and interactions manifest in the emotional, visceral, embodied experiences that one has in the world. Although they are not separate from the stories used to construct them, it is important to consider prelinguistic aspects of the way people are orientated in the world (Ahmed, 2008, 2014). Ahmed (2008) uses the concept of lines to describe orientation towards and around particular trajectories. A line of orientation might be described as similar to a path or journey even if it is nonlinear one: "the line becomes then simply a way of life, or even an expression of who we are" (Ahmed, 2008, p. 19). Yet, we do not follow every path available to us and "it is by following some lines more than others that we might acquire our sense of what we are" (Ahmed, 2008, p. 20). In the case of this study, some

young people are orientated along lines that lead them towards a path in the arts, while others are excluded from such orientations.

Translating these experiences, emotions, and orientations into words—whether this is called autobiography, autoethnography, narrative, phenomenological description, or art is a way of making these experiences visible to others. Even as such experiences manifest in ways that are not readily put into textual or visual form, they shape how individuals are orientated within sociocultural worlds (Ahmed, 2008; 2014). However, such efforts to translate experience into communicable forms, do not always account for the complexities of how people are oriented toward and around objects and subjects (Ahmed, 2008).

Given the important role of language in the way that identity is defined and discussed even when conceptualizing identity-shaping experiences through other avenues such as embodied experience and art making, it is relevant to consider the ways in which identity discourses become narratives and counter-narratives that prescribe understandings of identity (Howell, 2002). Conventional, or dominant narratives around race, class, gender, and other factors often serve to maintain existing relations of power. For example, the dominant narrative of the American dream propagates the idea that if an individual works hard in America, they can achieve financial and social success—yet, this narrative serves to minimize the way issues of racism, classism, sexism, and other factors thwart the realization of this "dream" (Bell, 2010). Feminist theory, critical race theory, and queer theory contend that counter-narratives and perspectives of those from marginalized social positions have the potential to destabilize the supremacy of the stories of those in positions of social power by illustrating the real challenges that structural injustices have caused in the lives of marginalized people (Anzaldúa, 1987/2007; Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Posner, 1997; Wilchins, 2002; Williams, 1991).

In describing how narratives, identity formation, and agency are intricately connected, Riessman (1993) writes: “Human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives” (p. 2). Even though there are non-verbal, pre-linguistic aspects to how one experiences events and actions that contribute to identity formation (Ahmed, 2008), narrative works to crystalize identity, to give it meaning (Riessman, 1993). Nonetheless, identity is never “fixed” and always remains dialogic and open to revision. However, the materiality of identity is important with regards to the politics of identity because it maintains that, although aspects of identity such as race, gender, sexuality, and class are socially constructed, they are not without material social consequences.

Identity Artifacts in Figured Worlds

Another means by which identities are constructed in social practice is through semiotic and material artifacts. Artifacts are mediating devices for the formation and stabilization of identities (Holland et al., 1998; Leander, 2002). “They are the means by which figured worlds are evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 61). Leander (2002) describes how “interactants define and stabilize identity by producing *identity artifacts*” (Leander, 2002, p. 198). These “artifacts-in-practice” (p. 200) are not limited to material objects but can include culturally significant identity-mediating tools such as words (Holland et al., 1998). Artifacts are mobilized within social worlds. For example, Leander (2002) described how a Black female student was constructed by her peers as “ghetto” (p. 198) through identity artifacts, “including a banner

displayed in the classroom, descriptions of the Black community, embodied spaces, and represented home geographies" (p. 198). While artifacts have long been an integral part of ethnographic research, Leander's (2002) study complexly demonstrates how artifacts can function within social interactions to inform processes of identification.

If someone is new to a figured world, they will learn how to utilize the tools or artifacts that are required to become a part of this world (Holland et al., 1998). The tools and/or artifacts facilitate ongoing processes of identification. These ongoing processes or practices are a key component of figured worlds. By "learning the figured world" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 101)—how one behaves, the tools one uses, the rules of the world—one develops identities within such spaces. These identities are developed through "artifacts, or indices of positioning, that newcomers [to the figured world] gradually learn to identify and then possibly to identify themselves with—either positively or negatively, through either acceptance or rejection" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 133).

Artifacts, in this sense are not limited to objects or things, but can include words, gestures, and emotions. Artifacts are "the means by which figured worlds are evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 61). Within the context of the figured world of art education, artifacts include art materials, works of art, and art classrooms. Artifacts of art education inform the practices of the figured world of art education, wherein artist identities are developed. For example, the works of art that are utilized within a curriculum play a major role in shaping how students learn to define "art" and who they learn to see as "artists." Hence, if the curriculum is primarily focused on painting and drawing, students may develop a limited definition of "art" as

only painting and drawing. And, if the curriculum is primarily focused on White male artists, students may develop a limited definition of "artist" as a White male.

Identity Activities in Figured Worlds

Within social practice theory of identity as conceptualized by Holland et al. (1998) through an interplay between relationship between acting, doing, thinking, and imagining. Drawing upon the work of Holland et al. (1998), Nygreen (2013) describes agency as "the act of imagining and creating new ways of being" (p. 69). Identities, in this definition of agency "are important bases from which people create new activities, new worlds, and new ways of being" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5).

Thus, identity and agency are intricately connected. Identities are negotiated on both personal and social levels and "improvisational responses to social and cultural openings and impositions elaborate identities on intimate terrain, even as these identities are worked and reworked on the social landscape" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 270). These identity negotiations have been called "identity work" (Calabrese Barton et al., 2013; Holland et al., 1998; Holland & Lave, 2001), emphasizing the processual nature of identity formation.

Identities are fluid and ever changing, yet some aspects of identity such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation become "durable" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 271) because of the ways in which such identity markers have social meaning. By studying "identity work" of teens in an arts internship program, I developed increased insight into the contexts, practices, and consequences of artist identity formation.

Agency and Spaces of Authoring in Figured Worlds

Agency can be defined as being able to act upon and impact the world. Agency allows for the potential for resistance, transgression, and innovation (Holland et al., 1998). Agency can be a means of creative empowerment that facilitates the realization of new, previously unimagined possibilities. This understanding of agency asserts that even though individuals are limited by structural constraints such as gender or class, one has the potential to access "spaces of authoring" (Voloshinov, 1929/1973, p. 87) that allow for some degree of autonomy that resists societal constraints. Indeed, art and art education have often been described as sites where improvisation and freedom are possible (Greene, 1988). Through this improvisation, a sense of agency that draws from "our ability to fantasize, to envision other worlds, to create other worlds" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 237) and facilitates the disruption of the status quo. Certainly, there are constraints such as time, space, and materials, especially when art and art education take place within institutional confines such as schools (Efland, 1976), yet the potential for agency remains.

Agency thus facilitates possibilities for creating new figured worlds and new ways of being. Holland et al. (1998) invoke Vygotsky (1978) in considering how play provides opportunities for agency within the constraints of the identities that are formed within figured worlds. Vygotsky argues that when children engage in improvisational play, it is a serious play, an activity by which they learn how to interact with others in meaningful ways and imagine new worlds and new ways of being in the world. As Holland et al. write: "Improvisations crafted in the moment are one of the margins of human agency. Self-directed symbolizations are a second means by which a modicum of agency is possible" (p. 278). Examples of these "self-directed symbolizations" (Holland et. al, 1998, p. 278) include forms of artistic expression or production.

Holland et al. (1998) posit that engagement in the arts invites such world-making potentialities to take root:

> There are situations, however, whether they be scenes of practice or scenes of consciousness, in which conventional relations are disturbed. Other sources of social valuation abide where realms of interaction—games, arts, rituals—are established in the partial suspension of the ordinary course of events. (p. 238)

Hence, participation in the arts and the alignment with an artistic identity has the potential to equip individuals with a sense of agency even though whether engagement with the arts is truly emancipatory is up for debate.

As with play, promises of liberation are prevalent in discourses on the arts and arts education (e.g., Greene, 1988; Gude, 2009; Pennisi, 2013; Rolling, 2011; Trafí-Prats, 2012). However, play and art are often viewed as distinct from everyday life, and thus seen as inconsequential to broader social justice progress. For these reasons, "liberatory" effects of art and play might remain limited to rarified spaces and fail to yield wider social and political impact. This play, this improvisation, is a space where agency resides. This sense of agency extends to self-making and the formation of the self as an aesthetic process expressed through narratives and other artistic formats (Lightfoot, 2004). In this study, I examine the consequences of artist identity work and contend that artist identity work in young people yields both personal consequences and social (in)justice consequences.

CHAPTER 3

PORTRAITURE METHODOLOGY

This study utilized portraiture as a methodological framework that informed the design and implementation of the research. Portraiture methodology is a form of qualitative inquiry used in educational research that draws upon aspects of ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological, and arts-based methods (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture offers a methodological fusion that is suited to a study that involves artists, art education, and conceptualizations of identity. I begin this methodological chapter with a brief overview of portraiture methodology, examining the paradigmatic tensions within portraiture methodology and discussing critical interpretations of portraiture methodology with examples from a series of scholars who have utilized critical race theory in concert with portraiture to explore raced, classed, and gendered experiences within educational contexts (Chapman, 2005; 2007; Dixson, 2005; Harding, 2005). Then, I explain how I apply portraiture to the methodological components of the study through the five central components of portraiture methodology as defined by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997): *context, voice, relationship, emergent themes*, and the *aesthetic whole*.

The concept of portraiture methodology was developed by Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983), who first demonstrated the methodology in practice in *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture*. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) further theorized and codified portraiture methodology in *The Art and Science of Portraiture*. Portraiture methodology is a hybrid qualitative methodology and contains elements of ethnography in its use of observational field notes and interviews (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; LeCompte, & Schensul, 2010; van Maanen, 2011), narrative inquiry in its focus on participants' stories (Riessman, 1993, 2008;

Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008), phenomenological research in its emphasis on the documentation of embodied experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 2014), and arts-based educational research in its attention to aesthetics both in the collection and presentation of research data (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Bresler, 2006; Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2011).

Portraiture methodology conceptualizes research as an aesthetic interpretation of phenomena while simultaneously adhering to an analytic perspective (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture attempts to combine "interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 185) as well as a critical political perspective within a research context. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) emphasize the benefits of working with such paradigmatic dualities within the methodology and efforts to merge these binaries of science and aesthetics:

> In developing the aesthetic whole, we come face to face with the tensions inherent in blending art and science, analysis and narrative, description and interpretation, structure and texture. We are reminded of the dual motivations guiding portraiture: to inform and inspire, to document and transform, to speak to the head and to the heart. How do we create a document that is both authentic and evocative, coded and colorful? (p. 243)

This multi-pronged approach, while likely set forth in efforts to demonstrate research credibility and complexity, creates a potentially conflicting paradigmatic stance that has prompted some critiques of the methodology (i.e., English, 2000; Hampsten, 2015). Portraiture relies on the ways in which description is both interpretive (a common tenet of artistic forms) and analytic (a characteristic associated with the sciences) (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2011). Hence, portraiture is framed as a methodological confluence of art and the social sciences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This sets up a dichotomy between art and science as opposing perspectives with science presented as rational and rigorous and art seen as the

opposite: emotional and unstable. This binary view of art and science provokes critique, but also an opportunity to consider extended ways of viewing science and art in research contexts.

Portraiture Methodology and the Arts

Portraiture methodology shares some similarities to "arts-based educational research" (ABER) (Barone & Eisner, 2006) in its confluence of the arts with social science research (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2011). Despite the arts-based inclinations of portraiture methodology, with some exceptions (e.g., Buffington, 2009; Campbell, 2006; Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2011; Gaztambide-Fernández, VanderDussen, & Cairns, 2014; Green, 2012; Grube, 2008; Smitka, 2015) there has not been widespread employment of portraiture methodology within art education research. However, there have been a handful of research publications involving portraiture methodology in the field of art education. For example, Buffington (2009) lauds portraiture's potential to act as a methodology that increases cross-cultural understanding when used within an art education context. In addition, Smitka (2015), using examples from a study with portraiture methodology to research the experiences of students as they draw portraits of their teacher, praises the way that portraiture methodology can serve as a methodology for exploring the way one experiences delineations of self and other.

Art education may have not fully embraced portraiture because the methodology mobilizes "portraiture" as a metaphor, but the methodology does not fully embrace a literal arts-based methodological perspective. Another explanation for this disconnect between portraiture methodology and arts-based research is that Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) handbook was published before arts-based research and arts-based educational research fully infiltrated mainstream methodological discussions. Perhaps there was hesitancy on the part of the

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis to veer away from the focus on narrative forms of qualitative inquiry in favor of a more artmaking-oriented methodological perspective.

Yet, there is room for expansion of the use of portraiture methodology within an art education research context. Although Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) primarily intended portraiture in a literary or metaphorical sense, when utilizing this methodology within the field of art education with research participants who are artists and/or are involved in art making, it is relevant to consider the physical and material aspects of the art form of portraiture. An increased focus on arts-based methods within portraiture can take the seeds planted by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis and expand upon them by more heartily embracing the visual arts potential within a portraiture methodological exploration. Other researchers have extended portraiture through art forms such as jazz and poetry. For instance, Dixson (2005) combined critical race theory with portraiture through jazz to expand upon portraiture through a discussion of her experiences as a jazz studies student, and Hill (2005) connected portraiture methodology and critical race theory through poetry. However, this confluence has not fully been explored through a visual arts perspective. A more literal take on portraiture as a methodology is particularly well-suited to art education research that involves artists in action. In conceptualizing portraiture methodology as a more overtly arts-based methodology, attempts to reconcile the scientific and the aesthetic are paradigmatically complicated. Aesthetic and scientific criteria for interpreting and judging a body of research are inherently divergent as they derive from disparate and seemingly incompatible paradigmatic worldviews—and such research decisions are inherently political.

Critical Portraiture Methodology

In addition to the aesthetic and scientific paradigmatic tensions within portraiture

methodology, it is also important to consider the political aspects of this research. Acknowledging the politics at work in every aspect of my research decision-making—from my choice of research site to my research participants to my interview questions to how I present my data and findings, I situate this research within a critical perspective. I do so because I aim to continually investigate how sociocultural power relations are embedded within my own practices as an art educator and art education researcher, but also within the figured worlds of the arts and arts education. In a critical educational research "education is considered to be a social institution designed for social and cultural reproduction and transformation" and "knowledge generated through this mode of research is an ideological critique of power, privilege, and oppression in areas of educational practice" (Merriam, 1998/2009, p. 4). In aligning my work with the critical paradigm, I make a concerted effort to acknowledge the role that relations of power around sociocultural identity markers such as race, class, gender, and sexuality influence the processes of artist identity formation at the center of the study and they are also significantly intertwined within the research process itself.

Employment of a critical portraiture methodology helps to illustrate how race, class, gender, sexuality, and other makers of identity influence the way one exists within the world and the way in which a "portrait" is drawn. An infusion of critical race theory (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) into portraiture methodology offers tools for exploring how experiences around race and its intersections with class, gender, sexuality, and other factors shape identity. While Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) do not overtly align portraiture with critical race theory, there are notable connections between these theoretical perspectives and portraiture methodology as both portraiture and critical race theory attend to the documentation of non-dominant narratives and experiences.

My allegiance with a critical paradigmatic view aligns this study with that of other researchers who utilize portraiture methodology. Several practitioners of portraiture have aligned the methodology with critical race theory (Chapman, 2005, 2007; Dixon, 2005; Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005; Ewing, 2016; Harding, 2005; Keene, 2014, 2016). Because education in the United States is so deeply shaped by racialized and classed inequality, critical race theory (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) offers important theoretical and methodological views relevant to educational research. While critical race theory was not historically utilized as a research methodology, several educational researchers have advocated for qualitative methodologies informed by critical race theory (e.g., Carter, 2003; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Portraiture methodology and critical race theory both emphasize narrative forms of inquiry. Theorists of narrative inquiry have explored the ways in which narratives guide our experiences, feelings, decisions, and identities (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 2006; Herman, & Vervaeck, 2005; Riessman, 1993, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Critical race theory, in methodological practice, has depended heavily upon narrative to illustrate the realities and the complexities of the lived experiences of those who are socially constrained because of racism and its intersections with sexism, classism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1995; Williams, 1991).

Portraiture methodology takes experiences, feelings, and other embodied ways of knowing into account when attempting to describe phenomena, while also maintaining a critical view of the social, political, and economic contexts within which they manifest (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Nuanced understandings of identity development can be gleaned

through these narratives, works of art, and phenomenological descriptions. In addition, narrative inquiry, portraiture methodology, and critical race theory place great importance on the validation of subjugated knowledge through the telling of stories or painting of metaphorical and/or material portraits of the lives of individuals who have often been silenced (Bell, 1992).

Chapman (2007), describing the relevance of this theoretical and methodological hybrid, writes that through portraiture with a critical race theory focus, a researcher can "connect participants' experiential knowledge as racialized subjects to the multiple ways in which people of color understand and navigate their communities, schools, and professional lives" (p. 157). Also, portraiture methodology and critical race theory-focused research methodology both emphasize the use of research as a means by which to document non-dominant narratives and experiences and to utilize these narratives as the basis for the formation of theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

This confluence of critical race theory and portraiture methodology also aids a researcher in identifying everyday workings of social and educational inequity as they appear in practice and how these practices that contribute to the maintenance of white supremacy in educational settings. Putting a critical perspective on the research ensures that the researcher remains consistently vigilant to instances within the data where relations of power are revealed and asserted. In the case of this study, I sought to remain alert to moments when such power relationships appeared in the context of the development of young artists in an out-of-school art educational setting. Since this research focuses on the intersection of aspects of sociocultural identity such as race, class, and gender with artistic identity development, a critical orientation is appropriate. Throughout this research, critical perspectives inform both my understanding of the

narratives, practices, and artifacts associated with processes of identity formation and the implications of identities within art educational contexts.

Research Design

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) conceptualized portraiture methodology around the following points: *context, voice, relationship, emergent themes,* and the *aesthetic whole*. Here, I use these concepts as frameworks for the research design of this study. In using these concepts as framing devices, they act as creative tools for reinterpretation and molding of portraiture methodology to my study. As such, I use these concepts to place my methodology flexibly in conversation with portraiture rather than dogmatically tied to the methodology. Hence, I use the concept of *context* as a structure for description of the research site as well as the also the broader situational contexts of the study including the contextual figured worlds associated with artist identity work discussed in Chapter 5, "Contextual Figured Worlds." I use the concept of *voice* to describe the participants of the study methods that I utilized in this research to capture the perspectives of the participants including my aesthetic and political decision to present participant self-narratives without the interruption of my researcher voice in Chapter 4, "Narrative Self-Portraits." The concept of *relationship* provided a space for me to describe my own positionality as a researcher in relation to my research participants and in relation to the contexts of the study and I do this at many points throughout the dissertation, but especially in Chapter 1, "Introduction," and Chapter 8, "Conclusions." Through the concept of *emergent themes*, I discuss the methods for data analysis in the study throughout the entire dissertation, but most directly in Chapter 7, "Consequences of Artist Identity Work: Discussion of Findings." Finally, I connect with Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' concept of the *aesthetic whole* by

describing my process for developing interpretive conclusions out of the disparate yet interconnected components of the study.

Context: Sites of Identity Formation and Sites of Research

Context, within portraiture methodology is "the setting—physical, geographic, temporal, historical, cultural, aesthetic—within which the action takes place" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 41). Portraiture methodology places emphasis on the contexts within which research portraits emerge, as Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) write: "portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences" (p. 3). Portraiture draws upon methods from ethnography, narrative, phenomenology inquiry, and art in these efforts at documenting complexities of human experience in relation to particular phenomena. Because identity formation within figured worlds is constantly renegotiated, this aspect of portraiture methodology is especially useful and aligns well with the conceptualization of the figured world. Within this ever-changing situational or contextual landscape, selves are constructed.

Context is also an important factor in social practice theory and Holland et al. (1998) use the concept of *figured worlds* to describe this assemblage of contextual factors in any situation. Contextual figured worlds wherein this identity work transpires play important roles promoting and/or discouraging the development of artist identities. The boundaries of figured worlds are constantly shifting, just as the components of these figured worlds change and the narratives that describe them are revised. In this work, I acknowledge the significance of the context within which discourses and practices around artist identity formation are created and expressed.

Additionally, I consider other contextual social dynamics of broader meta-narratives about how one's positional identity (including race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) intersects with an artistic identity.

In outlining the theory and methods of situational analysis, Clarke (2005) posits that context in qualitative research is not merely a set of external variables like time and place, but a constellation of contextual factors. Clarke (2005) asserts that "the important so-called contextual elements are actually *inside the situation itself.* They are *constitutive* of it, including structural and power elements, and we can map and analyze them as such" (p. 30). Clarke (2005) advocates for an extending of the concept of "contexts" within qualitative research to encompass broader "situations" that include human actors as well as nonhuman actants and how they inform phenomena. I utilized Clarke's (2005) framework to conceptualize the contexts/situations of the study because it offered an expansive focus on the role of contexts in interpreting situations within research. Because of the importance of context in both social practice theory of identity and in portraiture methodology, I dedicate Chapter 5, "Contextual Figured Worlds," to the role of contexts in identity formation.

Rationale for the Research Site and Research Participant Selection

When I first set out to examine artist identity formation in teens in New Orleans, I had intended to examine these processes by studying the experiences of young people from marginalized social identity positions, particularly Black teenagers attending New Orleans public or charter schools. While my research site shifted from a school to an arts internship program at a contemporary arts center, I remain focused on my initial goal of examining how sociocultural factors influence artist identity formation processes. One motivating factor that prompted me to

look outside of schools for a research site was an encounter that I had while attending a workshop at the 2016 American Education Research Association Annual Meeting in Washington, D. C. There, I had an opportunity to speak with Adrienne Dixson, a critical education scholar who has used portraiture methodology in research about education in post-Katrina New Orleans, and Eve Ewing, a poet and critical scholar of education, who has used portraiture methodology in research into public school closings on the South Side of Chicago. I asked them about her perspective on the ethics involved in conducting research with marginalized communities in New Orleans for a White university researcher. They offered several points of advice, but one that stuck with me was the advice to consider "studying up," meaning that instead of doing research about marginalized communities, that researchers who are themselves in positions of relative social power based upon race, class, educational status, and/or other factors should instead examine systems of power in action by studying elites.

The concept of "studying up" first appeared in the work of Nader (1972), an anthropologist, who encouraged anthropologists to do ethnographic research of not only those who are marginalized, as had been the traditional practice of ethnography, but those who are in positions of power as well. Within educational research, there is precedent for this practice of "studying up" in the work of Gaztambide-Fernández (2009), who has done research with students in elite settings including boarding schools and specialized arts high schools, argues that "studying the experiences of students in the most privileged educational settings sheds light on the social and cultural dynamics that shape inequality across the educational system" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009, p. 1). As I further developed my study and sought a research site, I kept this concept of "studying up" in mind.

Considering that I wanted to study processes of artist identity work in teens, I was pleased when I learned about the Teen Arts Internship at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) New Orleans. Without prior knowledge of the demographics of the interns in this program, I arranged to conduct data collection with the interns in this program. As it turned out, this program had a very specific focus on the development of young artists, who, by their very participation in this program could be characterized as elites. The program's focus on identity development allowed me to employ purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting "*information-rich cases*" (Patton, 1990, p. 169) rather than random situations. Purposive sampling is most appropriate for qualitative research where the goal is not broad generalizability, but where the inquiry is directed towards a group of participants because they can offer targeted insights into the research questions (Daniel, 2012; Emmel, 2013; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2011). Purposive sampling thus facilitates the answering of the research questions and can yield "*logical generalizations*" (Patton, 1990, p. 175), or meaningful understandings, about the phenomena of study. While I recognize that artistic identities are formed in multiple sites, this research site and the internship program with which the participants were engaged was especially suited to the answering of my research questions because the internship program was shaped around the development of artist identities in teens. In this research with privileged young people involved in the arts, I have found that there is much to learn about the ways in which sociocultural and economic inequity shape artist identity formation.

Research Location

The Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) New Orleans, a multidisciplinary arts center served as the central research site for the study. The CAC was founded in 1976 as a community

arts organization in the burgeoning arts district near downtown New Orleans. The arts district flourished with the CAC as one of its anchors and in 1990, it underwent a major renovation that solidified its place as the most prominent platform for contemporary visual and performing arts in New Orleans (Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans, n.d.). One of the central points of the CAC's mission is to provide arts education programming for the people of New Orleans. Much of this arts education programming at the CAC is geared towards teens who are interested in the visual and/or performing arts. Teen arts programming at the CAC has included, at various points in time, an Artist Exchange Field Trip, a Teen Leadership Council, a Teen Zine, a Teen Arts Exhibition Group, and a Teen Arts Internship program. The Teen Arts Internship program at the CAC hosted a group of teens who show interest in developing themselves as artists while also gaining experience in teaching in the CAC summer camp. The program was open to high school students or those who had just completed high school (from those entering 9th grade to those who had just completed 12th grade). To participate, prospective interns were required to confirm that they had their own access to transportation to the CAC and to complete an application that asked them to respond to the following prompts:

- What do you hope to gain from this internship?
- Describe specific skills and leadership experiences that you have.
- Describe your experiences working with children
- What experiences do you have in the arts?
- Describe a project you have done that you are most proud of (a piece of art, a work of writing, a school assignment, a community service project, etc.)
- What are your future goals: In the arts? In your education? Professionally?
- Who is an artist, musician, dancer, writer, social leader, or innovative thinker that has influenced you? How have they influenced you?

During the summer of 2016, this unpaid internship program lasted for four weeks from July 11 to August 5 with participants meeting Monday through Friday from 9 AM-3 PM. The first part of each day was spent on activities geared towards the development of the interns as artists: engaging in self-reflective journaling about their journey as artists, learning about art as a tool for activism, creating activist art and presenting it to others, going on a field trip to local art galleries, being mentored by practicing arts, developing and teaching art lessons, and learning to present themselves as artists. The second part of each day was spent working as a camp counselor in the CAC Summer Arts Camp. The focus of my research observations was on the first part of each day, rather than on their engagement with the summer camp in the afternoons. I selected the Teen Arts Internship program at the CAC as the focus of my study because it offered a space for young people to immerse themselves intensively in the development of themselves as artists, a central focus of my research.

Research Participants

To further understand intersections of sociocultural identity formation with artist identity formation in adolescents, the first-person perspectives of teens were imperative. In this study, my research participants were interns in the Teen Arts Internship program at the CAC in New Orleans. In total, there were eighteen interns involved in the program and while most attended the program every day, there were some who only attended sporadically or for limited time periods. Additional participants included the Teen Arts Coordinator and Leader of the internship program, Stella, and two spoken-word poets, Kataalyst Alcindor and Beck Cooper, who led a special workshop as part of the internship. Many of the interns expressed interest in multiple arts disciplines, but the most common area of focus among the interns was visual arts with nearly all

of the interns stating that they were involved in the visual arts. Four of the interns lived at least an hour outside of New Orleans (with one of these living three hours away). Of the interns, one attended a non-denominational all-girls private school in New Orleans, two attended traditional public schools outside of New Orleans, two were homeschooled outside of New Orleans, six attended highly selective charter schools in New Orleans, seven attended Catholic schools in New Orleans, and school data was not available for one of the interns. There were six interns who openly identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community. There were five interns who identified as male (including one intern who identified as transgender male) and thirteen interns who identified as female. There were two interns who identified as Latina or Hispanic, five who identified as Black (including one intern who identified as biracial—Black and White), and eleven who identified as White. The following chart (see Table 3.1) identifies the intern-participants, lists the type of high school they attended, their arts discipline(s) of focus, their race or ethnicity, their gender, and, their LGBTQ+ identification, if this was disclosed.

Table 3.1. Research participants.

Pseudonym	Type of High School Attended	Arts Discipline(s)	Race or Ethnicity	Gender	LGBTQ+ identification (if disclosed)
Erica	Private School for Girls in New Orleans	Unknown	Black	Female	
Lucy	Highly Selective Charter School in New Orleans	Visual Arts	White	Female	Queer/ Bisexual
James	Catholic School in New Orleans	Film, Photography, Theatre, Dance, Visual Arts	White	Male	Gay
Olivia	Catholic School for Girls & Public School for the Arts in New Orleans	Visual Arts, Fashion Design	White	Female	
Joey	Catholic School for Boys in New Orleans	Musical Theatre, Visual Arts	White	Male	Bisexual
Alex	Highly Selective Charter School in New Orleans	Visual Arts	White	Male	Transgender

(table continues)

Pseudonym	Type of High School Attended	Arts Discipline(s)	Race or Ethnicity	Gender	LGBTQ+ identification (if disclosed)
Jasmine	Historically Black Catholic School for Girls & Public School for the Arts in New Orleans	Visual Arts	Black	Female	
Alyssa	Catholic School for Girls in New Orleans	Visual Arts	White	Female	
Nora	Highly Selective Charter School in New Orleans	Visual Arts	Latina	Female	
Jordan	Unknown	Music, Visual Arts	Black	Male	
Lily	Public School outside of New Orleans	Visual Arts	White	Female	
Zoe	Public School outside of New Orleans	Visual Arts	White	Female	Bisexual
Clara	Catholic School for Girls in New Orleans	Visual Arts	White	Female	
Tristan	Highly Selective Charter School in New Orleans	Visual Arts, Film, Photography, Music	Black & White (Biracial)	Male	
Lauren	Highly Selective Charter School in New Orleans	Music, Visual Arts	Black	Female	
Rose	Homeschooled outside of New Orleans	Visual Arts	White	Female	
Cecilia	Catholic School for Girls in New Orleans	Photography, Visual Arts, Film, Music	Hispanic	Female	"I can see myself on some spectrum of the LGBTQ+ community although labels overwhelm me."
Natalie	Homeschooled outside of New Orleans	Theatre, Film, Photography	White	Female	

Voice: Data Collection Methods

Voice, in portraiture methodology refers to the perspectives and expressions of the researcher as well as the participants and how they work in dialogue (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1998). Both portraiture methodology and social practice theory are rooted in

ethnographic traditions and both utilize ethnographic methods including participant observation and the collection of field notes, interviews focused on narratives, and the collection of artifacts. In using these data collection methods, I focused on narratives, practices, artifacts, with an eye towards phenomenological aspects when they appeared. In this study, I utilized the concept of *voice* as a framework to describe the data collection methods I used to chronicle the voices of the participants in concert with my own voice as a researcher. Informed by social practice theory which theorizes that identity formation takes place through social practices, I collected data through three central data sources: observations, documentation of visual and material artifacts, and interviews.

Qualitative methodologies that emphasize narrative and phenomenological modes of inquiry such as portraiture are well suited to research into aspects of identity development because they provide space for identities to unfold through the voices of participants within the research (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008; Mishler, 1999; Riessman, 1993, 2008). Because identities are always evolving and because they are situated within life experiences and practices, quantitative research methods alone will not suffice. As Mishler (1999) writes, in a work of narrative research on identity formation and craftartists: "We express, display, make claims for who we are—and who we would like to be—in the stories we tell and how we tell them" (p. 19). These identity-shaping narratives are sometimes called discourses (Gee, 2001-02) and can manifest in unexpected ways. Voice is deployed through written and spoken words, but also through practices: doing things and making things such as art and artifacts. Indeed, identity work often happens through discursive practices using discourses in practice, mobilizing or employing discourses. These practices happen in contexts that includes situational factors such as time and place, but also the discourses themselves.

In addition to narrative and the arts, expressions of voice in portraiture can manifest through non-verbal, embodied avenues. Portraiture methodology thus draws upon phenomenology as a method for accessing embodied experience because as Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) write: "sometimes the gestures speak much louder than words, in which case the portraitist needs to vividly describe the visible cues and the body language" (p. 99). Riessman (1993) invokes phenomenology as a means to represent a "prelinguistic realm of experience" (p. 8). Yet, as Riessman (1993) states "transcribing experience" (p. 11) is difficult because of the inability of written text to fully represent experience in words. Riessman (1993) notes that "by finding meaning in experience and then expressing this meaning in words, the speaker enables the community to think about experience and not just live it" (p. 11), noting the usefulness of using phenomenological description to represent lived experience. In his handbook on developing phenomenological research, Vagle (2014) writes:

> The primary purpose of phenomenology as a research methodology stemming from its philosophical roots is to study what it is like as we *find-ourselves-being-in-relation-with others* (e.g., teacher with students, nurse with patient, therapist with client) and *other things* (e.g., a good book, some bad news, our favorite activity, an anxiety). (p. 20)

Of particular relevance to research at the intersection of the arts, education, identities, experience, and the sociocultural are phenomenologies related to race/ethnicity, gender, class, (dis)ability, gender, and sexuality (e.g., Alcoff, 1998; Ahmed, 2008; Fanon, 1952/2008; Lee, 2014; Ngo, 2016, 2017; Travis et al., 2018; Yancy, 2017).

Observations

I used observational field notes as a means of documenting practices around artist identity formation within the study. Through observational field notes, I documented activities within the arts internship. I conducted over 20 hours of observations throughout the four-week duration (July 11-August 5, 2016) of the CAC Teen Arts Internship. Drawing upon the traditions of ethnography, portraiture methodology utilizes observational field notes to provide detailed description of cultural phenomena (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). During my observations, I wrote observational field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) to document the activities and interactions of the internship. In my observations, I was attuned to physical structures such as the contemporary arts center and the surrounding neighborhood, social interactions among students and between students and their instructor, and artifacts such as artwork and writing created by the interns. I focused my observational field notes on instances where narratives about artist identity manifested in practice through actions of students both individually and with others.

Documentation of Visual and Material Artifacts

In additional to written observational field notes, I documented visual and material artifacts of artist identity work in young people through a range of different sources. Visual and material artifacts were observed through 1) artifacts associated with the research site: the CAC and surrounding neighborhood as well as classroom teaching materials and classroom environment and 2) intern-generated artworks including an activist art, a collage representing their past, present, and future selves, artworks from art teaching lessons, and drawings from an

activity that I facilitated. These artifacts function as physical traces of artist identity work in progress.

I took photographs of the CAC site and the surrounding neighborhood during classes as well as during our walking field trip. In addition, I documented artifacts including artwork created through the course of the program, instructional materials, and any other objects of relevance through photography. I also took photographs of instructional materials used in the internship program such as charts, posters, written documentation of the learning process in the program, written displays of collective brainstorming activities, and artwork created by the interns.

Throughout the course of the internship, there were several opportunities for the interns to create artworks. There was a week-long session dedicated to the development and implementation of an activist artwork. The interns also created collages and visuals that incorporated text and images in various assignments. For example, during a walking field trip to some nearby art galleries, the interns were asked to select artworks that represented their past, present, and future selves. Upon return from the trip, they assembled these artworks into collages and created accompanying artist statements. In addition, one of the assignments for the interns was to conduct an art lesson with their peers acting as students. Through this art teaching exercise, the interns created various artworks.

To generate visual depictions of how the interns viewed themselves and how they would represent themselves visually, I conducted a drawing elicitation (Mayaba & Wood, 2015; Mitchell, 2011; Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, Smith, & Campbell, 2011) (see Appendix B). In this activity, I asked participants to create two drawings. For the first drawing, participants were asked to select an object that they had with them that represented them as an artist and to make a

drawing of this object. For the second drawing, participants were asked to represent themselves in any way that they wished. For both drawing elicitation prompts, participants were encouraged to write text to accompany their drawings. After the drawings were completed, I invited participants to share their drawings with the others in the group. This activity was audio recorded and later transcribed.

Interviews

For the interview component of the data collection for my dissertation, I conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A). In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer asks a series of pre-planned, open-ended questions, generally organized in thematic categories (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Olson, 2011; Mishler, 1986, 1990, 1999; Witzel & Reiter, 2012). Such questions are guided by the interests of the study and give some structure to the interview while also allowing for the interviewee or interviewer to redirect the topics of the interview as relevant. A semi-structured approach can yield unexpected information and helps to facilitate greater participation from the interviewee in shaping a narrative on the topics discussed. Semi-structured interviewing also allows for the use of unscripted follow-up questions that can result in even more information that may not have come up in a more structured interview session.

I organized my interview questions around my central research questions, with a focus on artist identity work in young people. In considering the specific questions that I would ask in the interviews, I decided that, following Holland et al.'s (1998) social practice theory of identity, I would aim to ask students about their experiences in terms of their "past, present, and possible futures" (Calabrese Barton et al., 2013, p. 41) in relation to the visual arts, a concept that was integral to the internship curriculum. Although I was interested in the role of conceptualizations of artist identity through the past, present, and future and drew upon life history approaches to

interviewing (Haglund, 2004), I did not utilize a strictly chronological approach to interviewing. Instead, I began the interviews by asking the interns to discuss their involvement in the internship program at the CAC. I then questioned the interns about their early art experiences and then finally asked them to share their future aspirations and expectations in relation to art. Ultimately, because my main intention in the interviews for this research was to provoke interviewees to tell stories of their experiences, this non-sequential approach allowed for the potential for the emergence of spontaneous narratives.

I conducted interviews with nine of the interns from the Teen Arts Internship. Each interview lasted approximately one hour in length and took place at the CAC. I utilized a digital audio recorder for the interviews and later transcribed and coded the interviews. Immediately following each interview, I wrote reflective field notes. In these field notes, I described the context of the interview, my impressions of my conversation with the interviewee, and noted non-verbal elements of the conversation with attention to the phenomenological. Reflecting on each interview, I immediately engaged in preliminary coding based upon some of the key terms and phrases used in the interview. As my analysis progressed, I wrote analytic memos (Saldaña, 2009) where I documented further analytic reflections upon the meaning of the information that I had collected in the interviews. These memos became part of the basis for my analysis. Through this process, it occurred to me that by agreeing to be interviewed, students were further solidifying their identities as artists.

Relationship: Researcher and Participants

Because of the emphasis on solidarity with research participants, portraiture methodology embraces the interconnectedness of researcher and subject (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Hence, within a portraiture methodology, the *relationship* between researcher and research participants is central (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Herein, I use the concept of *relationship* to describe my own positionality as a research in relation to my research participants and in relation to the contexts of the study. Describing the work of Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997), Heather Harding (2005) states, "portraiture engages both the researcher and the participant in a human archeology that allows a co-construction of an interpretive narrative" (p. 53), emphasizing the collaborative nature of portraiture methodology. Further, Hill-Brisbane (2008) writes that "portraiture allows the researcher to organize a narrative around central themes from the data and write layered stories where study participants are the subjects, not the objects, of the research" (p. 645), facilitating the co-creation of research and destabilizing the hierarchical relationship between researcher and research participant.

Researcher and Participant Positionalities

Portraiture methodology invites critical reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Hence it is imperative that I acknowledge and critically examine how my positionality influences my research. Ideologies about race in the United States have been pervasive, "making it nearly impossible to imagine nonracialized ways of thinking about identity, longing, and difference" (Haney López, 2006, p. 87). Haney López defines race as "the historically contingent social systems of meaning that attach to elements of morphology and ancestry. This definition can be pushed on three different levels, the physical, the social, and the material" (p. 10) as he describes the ways in which race and, especially whiteness have been constructed through the legal system in the United States. Thandeka (2001) describes whiteness as "an upper-class economic ploy (classism) [that] became a lower-class

psychological need (racism)" (p. 42) and "the process of being 'whited'" (p. 73) as one fraught with "shame" (p. 1). Hence, whiteness is an elusive, yet ever-present social force that has shapes positional identities in the United States and beyond and it is inevitably linked to this research. Here, I describe some aspects of my sociocultural positionality in consideration of the significance of race and class. In Chapter 4: "Narrative Self-Portraits," I tell my own artist identity narrative along with the narratives of my research participants.

Although I was born and raised in New Orleans, my parents grew up elsewhere—my mother was born in Connecticut and grew up in Oklahoma and my father was born in Oklahoma and grew up in Alabama. According to family lore, my maternal grandfather's lineage can be traced back to Oceanus Hopkins, the only child born on the Mayflower. This branch of the family lived for generations in Connecticut. My maternal grandmother's branch of the family was late 19th century Irish immigrants who also lived in Connecticut. My paternal grandparents were late 19th century Irish and German immigrants who lived in New York. Over time, like most people of European ancestry in the United States, my family has been racialized as "White" (Haney López, 2006; Thandeka, 2000). So, while my family does not have deep roots in New Orleans, I was born there, grew up there, went to school there, started my career as an art educator there, and lived there until August 2005 when Hurricane Katrina happened.

Despite this lineage of whiteness, I have been oriented away from whiteness in various ways throughout my life (Ahmed, 2008). Growing up as a middle class, heterosexual, White girl in New Orleans in the 1980s and 1990s, I attended racially diverse public magnet schools during a time when school desegregation efforts were still at work in Louisiana (Bankston & Caldas, 2002). My father worked as a high school English teacher (at both a Catholic school and a public school) and my mother has worked as a writer and editor for Tulane University for many

years—both of them influencing my interest in writing and the visual arts. I grew up with my two younger sisters, Iris and Tricia. When, I was 23 and pregnant with my first child, I learned that I had an older half-brother, Juan, from Mexico (who is finishing up his PhD just as I complete mine)—my father had played baseball in Mexico during his twenties before he met my mother. My two closest friends from childhood are Vietnamese American. My two children and their father are African American—with ancestors who were enslaved in Louisiana. While, I am not in any way claiming that I can divest of my whiteness by association with non-White people, I have tried to do so at times, all the while fully acknowledging that I have access to the power and privilege of whiteness through my pale skin, my green eyes, and my straight-ish light brown hair.

Even as I state these aspects of my identity, I acknowledge that it is difficult to openly describe the deeply personal and painful ways in which race and class have intersected within my own life. In considering my positioning, I find Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) words appropriate:

> As narrative inquirers we work within the space not only with our participants but with ourselves. Working in this space means that we become visible with our own lived and told stories. Sometimes, this means that our own unnamed, perhaps secret, stories come to light as much as do those of our participants. This confronting of ourselves in our narrative past makes us vulnerable as inquirers because it makes secret stories public. In narrative inquiry, it is impossible (or if not impossible, then deliberately self-deceptive) as researcher to stay silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self" (p. 61-62).

Even as I aim to write with vulnerability, there are silences within my own story as I attempt to tell it here. Part of this is my interest in protecting the privacy of myself and my family—even as I try to be vulnerable in my writing—as much as I aim to protect the privacy of my research participants. Acknowledging this, I also recognize the inevitable silences in the stories of my research participants.

The specific research site of this study, the CAC in New Orleans, has been an instrumental part of my own development as an artist, art educator, and now researcher of art education. Because of this and other shared aspects of our experiences, my own narrative is intertwined with the narratives of my research participants, and it informs my researcher perspective within this investigation. Hence, my background places me at a specific vantage point in relation to my research participants. However, even though I aim to acknowledge the shared personal experiences between myself and my participants, in doing qualitative research with narrative elements, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and sense of significance and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others" (p. 122). I find this to be a central point because this study extends beyond my personal connection to New Orleans and the research participants to address the broader sociocultural and educational processes at work in the development of student identification with the visual arts. Hence, while my personal positionality in relation to my participants shapes my motivations and perspectives on this investigation, my central focus is on the wider implications for the field of art education and for struggles for educational justice.

An integral characteristic of portraiture methodology is a focus on a search for "goodness" through the research process, but not in a way that depicts "idealization and celebration" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 9). Instead, this "goodness" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), rooted in Black feminist theory and critical educational research (Collins, 2000/2009; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2009), acts not as oblivious idealism, but, rather, as a resistance to deficit-based representations of research subjects from non-dominant backgrounds in social science research (Valencia, 1997). This attention to "goodness" within a

research context, particularly one that involves research participants who are in some way socially disenfranchised, contributes to the "de-marginalization of the research subject" (Anderson, 2011, p. 103) and places the researcher and research subject in a less hierarchical relationship and more in solidarity.

However, solidarity is not always an act of resistance against the status quo. Solidarity can indeed be negative when it is shared among privileged people and used as a tool of oppression of others. Such "solidarity" between those who benefit from white supremacist systems of power is detrimental because this "solidarity" results in the maintenance of injustices. Because I do identify with my research participants and share many of their social positionings, our relationship could be considered one of solidarity—around the arts, around shared social justice goals, but also around shared positionality around race and class in many cases. There are some positive aspects to the shared perspectives on the importance of the arts and social justice between myself and the participants. However, our shared social positionalities around aspects of privilege around race and class, in particular, worked to "solidify" some of the exclusionary aspects of the arts. Indeed, there is often a collective silencing of marginalized people when those in positions of power form solidarities in efforts of oppression—even when such efforts are not intentional. This manifests in the maintenance of the status quo structures of socioeconomic inequities. In the case of this study, it manifested in the maintenance of status quo participation in an opportunity to form affiliations and have experiences within an artworld context that could lead to the adoption of artist identities and futures in the arts.

Indeed, many of the interns and I had very similar positionalities and experiences that led to this sense of "solidarity." For example, Lucy and I went to the same elite public schools from Kindergarten through high school. We were both in the Talented in the Arts-Visual program and

even had one of the same art teachers at our K-8 school. As an adult, I also taught for a while at the same school with one of her other art teachers. Although we were years apart in age, I identified with a lot of Lucy's experiences growing up in New Orleans. Lucy's description of our elementary/middle school as an underfunded school was intriguing to me. I would agree that the school could benefit from additional funds. However, compared to most of the other public charter schools in New Orleans, it is much more highly supported by parents and community members. Therefore, the description of the school as underfunded was surprising to me. It revealed to me that Lucy was viewing the school from a lens of privilege and that even though she had gone to public schools, she seemed to come from a background of economic stability. Lucy was not the only intern who shared some aspects of my own background. Joey attended an all-boys Catholic high school where my father once taught English. In addition, when Tristan said that he wanted to attend Pratt Institute and major in art, I connected to this because I, myself, was accepted to Pratt for my undergraduate studies, even though I did not ultimately go to school there. Hence, there were many moments of shared identification between myself and the interns and this likely facilitated my access to them as research participants. We may have also created a sense of solidarity through a shared belief that art is beneficial to individuals and society and that art can function as a form of activism. However, these shared positionalities may not necessarily translate into "solidarity" in the sense of resistance against all forms of structural social injustice such as racism and classism, for example.

Research Trustworthiness

Qualitative research, in general, has been widely criticized for lacking scientific validity by positivist critics. Qualitative researchers have answered that scientific validity is not needed,

wanted, or even possible within qualitative research (Haraway, 1988; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). Many qualitative educational researchers have advocated for more complexly nuanced understandings of truth and "trustworthiness" (Lather, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in terms of research. This critique is also answered by feminist researchers and theorists who note that there is value is partial knowledge and that subjugated voices are often obscured through the supremacy of traditional notions of research where there are singular truths to be discovered (Haraway, 1988). It is plausible to connect this perspective to that of Haraway (1988), who writes of "situated knowledge" (p. 575) from a feminist perspective: "feminism loves another science: the sciences and politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood" (p. 589), illustrating a post-positivist realist stance where reality exists, but is always interpreted subjectively and with multiple truths.

Portraiture, like many narrative-based methodologies, resists the validity standards of quantitative or experimental research models. Because it attends to the narratives and experiences of human subjects, much qualitative research resists positivist understandings of "reality" or "truth." By contrast, proponents of constructivist, poststructuralist, and critical epistemologies call notions of truth and objectivity into question (Haraway, 1988; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). Consequently, most qualitative research uses more subjective appraisals of research such as "trustworthiness" (Lather, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In keeping with similar epistemological views on truth, reality, and knowledge, portraiture methodology rejects positivist measures of reliability and validity (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Further, a postmodern reassessment of qualitative research methodologies calls for "acknowledging the embodiment and situatedness of knowledge producers—both us (the researchers) and them (who and what we are studying)" (Clarke, 2005, p. 20).

Others have suggested that qualitative researchers must make increased efforts to establish the reliability and validity of their research (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Loh, 2013). Lincoln & Guba (1985) provide suggested tactics that can be utilized by qualitative researchers to establish trustworthiness including member checks and reflexive journaling. Using Lincoln and Guba's measures as a guide, Loh (2013) identifies how several key qualitative research handbooks (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2011), have addressed each of these methods for ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data. These methods tackle a long-term concern for qualitative researchers who rely heavily upon narrative: how to establish reliability, validity, and/or trustworthiness (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Mishler, 1990; Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman, 1993). These tools are useful in answering questions regarding reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of qualitative research.

The social positionings of researcher and participants influence the questions that are asked as well as the information that participants share (Alcoff, 1991; Anderson & Jack, 2006; Best, 2003; Hawkins, 2010; Widdance Twine & Warren, 2000). When one tells a story, one's audience (or listener) matters because one tells stories differently to different listeners or audiences. As Riessman (1993) writes: "In telling about an experience, I am also creating a self––how I want to be known by them" (p. 11). Thus, researchers who seek narratives must always be cognizant of how their positioning affects the stories they are told by participants as this impacts the trustworthiness of the research.

Analysis of experience as represented through narratives always becomes a new story shaped by the researcher as they try to represent the perspectives of research subjects. Further, attempts by a researcher to provide opportunities for those who are marginalized or historically

silenced to express their voices are complicated by power imbalances between researcher and research subject (LeCompte, 1993; Lincoln, 1993). Because narrative and other qualitative forms of research cannot be measured in the same ways as research in the hard sciences, Donald Polkinghorne (1988) contends that within narrative-centered research, validity simply implies "well-grounded and supportable" (p. 175) work. Polkinghorne suggests that researchers strive for the representation of "verisimilitude" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 176), or that which gets as close as possible to accurate portrayals of the narratives and experiences of research participants. Since the participants in this study are adolescents, there may be some concern about their reliability as narrators. However, because one of the central purposes of this inquiry is to ascertain the viewpoints of adolescents, their narratives are essential. In addition, a portraiture methodological focus allows for the articulation of hidden things, yet words often fail to fully encompass the range of emotional and embodied experiences of a person, language is an essential avenue by which to express what one knows.

Despite the difficulty in making truth claims and factual representations of reality within qualitative research, I strive to take steps to ensure that my data and analysis are the best approximation of my participants' intended perspectives. Thus, to answer to questions of research trustworthiness, enacted methods suggested in Loh's (2013) review of trustworthiness tactics in qualitative inquiry and rooted in Lincoln & Guba's (1985) guidelines. First, to account for issues of research validity and reliability, I carefully documented each phase of the research process from the development of the research question to the documentation of interview questions to the coding processes (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Additionally, I conducted member-checks with participants to confirm the validity of my representations of their perspectives.

Considerations of the relative social positioning between interviewer and interviewee nearly always influences what is asked and what is revealed, making interviews that are uninfluenced by sociocultural positioning impossible (Abell, Locke, Condor, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006; Best, 2003; Song & Parker, 1995; Widdance Twine & Warren, 2000; Yow, 2006). With many of the interns, I shared some positional similarities in that I also grew up in New Orleans and had a connection to the visual arts and social justice. This allowed for me to have easy rapport with most of the interns, but it might have also hindered my willingness to ask them difficult questions. In addition, I was impressed by the interns and their accomplishments as artists at such a young age and by their articulation of their experiences in their development as artists and this may have limited my inclination to ask critical questions of them during interviews (Yow, 2006). However, it may not matter if I am offering an "accurate portrayal" of the interns—it's more important that I use portraiture to reveal something about artist identity formation and who has access to such. That is the nature of portraiture, that through artistic interpretations of a phenomena, one can reveal that which might otherwise be obscured.

Emergent Themes: A Bricolage of Data Analysis Methods

In portraiture methodology, there is a focus on the way that data analysis reveals *emergent themes* with Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) describing this as "an iterative *and* generative process; the themes emerge from the data and they give the data shape and form" (p. 185). Here, I describe the processes I utilize for data analysis in search of *emergent themes* that I ultimately used as the basis for the formation of theory in relation to my research questions. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) discuss the importance of allowing for emergent themes to guide the analysis of a portraiture research project. I utilize contexts, practices, and

consequences as organizing structures to analyze the emergent themes from the data. To realize the emergent themes of my study, I utilized a few different methods for facilitating data analysis. After assembling the data, I began to see a need for a method of analysis and found Clarke's (2005) situational analysis to offer a series of appropriate tools. Clarke (2005) identifies "qualitative analysis after the postmodern turn as the proper work of bricoleurs (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Bricoleurs assemble project-appropriate tool kits from a broad repertoire of available concepts and approaches—selecting what they believe are 'the right tools for the job'" (Clarke, 2005, p. 146). I take this bricolage approach when assembling the analytical tools appropriate for my research. The two central analytical tools that I use are situational analysis (Clarke, 2005) and narrative analysis.

Situational Analysis

While this study depends upon individual narratives and presents these in the form of portraits, it also considers the broader situational factors involved in shaping the identities represented through these portraits. Situational maps can be used to analyze ethnographic and interview data collected in a research project as well as examine extant narrative discourses, visual discourses, and historical discourses as related to a study. Clarke describes three central types of situational maps and forms of situational analysis: situational maps, social worlds/arenas maps, and positional maps. Clarke (2005) calls her strategies for situational analysis "*analytic exercises*" (p. 84) intended to aid the processes of analysis rather than being a final product of analysis. One of these exercises is creating "messy maps" (p. 89) of data. With these "messy maps," Clarke (2005) says "there can be considerable fluidity through negotiations, repositionings, and so on in the relations portrayed in these maps, including the addition and

deletion of actors and actants and so on over time" (p. 89). This analytical flexibility allowed me to revise and reevaluate my data over time as I sought to conceptualize key aspects of artist identity work that occurred within my research. I began my analysis of the artist identity work I observed by creating "messy maps" of the various aspects of the situation such as "inequality in NOLA," "being recognized as an artist," and "Katrina" (see Figure 3.1).

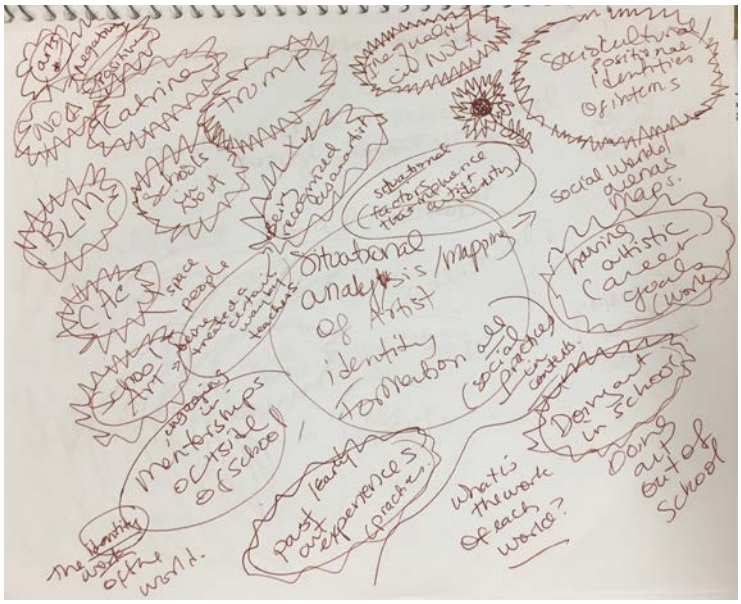

Figure 3.1. Situational analysis through "messy mapping."

Situational Mapping

Clarke (2005) lays out a theoretical and methodological case for the use of situational mapping. Situational mapping offers "strategies for articulating the elements in the situation and examining relations among them" (Clarke, 2005, p. 86). This mapping takes the form of linear and non-linear lists. Clarke's (2005) situational mapping is partly influenced by Latour's (1987, 1988) actor network theory in the rejection of a hierarchical sorting of data and in the emphasis on the ways in which human and nonhuman actants influence situations. This focus on listing a series of factors in a situation or phenomenon aligns with the work of Bogost (2012), who claims

that “ontographical cataloging hones a virtue: the abandonment of anthropocentric narrative coherence in favor of worldly detail” (p. 41-42). Further, Bennett (2010) also uses listing of assemblages of things to illustrate the importance of consideration of the agency of nonhuman actants— “thing-power” (p. 4). In assembling lists of things, they become “vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics” (p. 5). This open-ended acknowledgement of the multiple situational factors, human and nonhuman, is at the heart of situational mapping. The open-endedness and anti-hierarchical nature of situational mapping allows for unexpected analytical interpretations to emerge.

Mapping Social Worlds/Arenas

Clarke (2005) recommends the mapping of social worlds/arenas, “cartographies of collective commitments, relations, and sites of action” (p. 86). Clarke’s (2005) social worlds/arenas are akin to Holland et al.’s (1998) figured worlds as both are informed by symbolic interactionism. These concepts attend to the ways in which macro-level social phenomena are formulated at micro-levels in the practices of individual people within these worlds. Conceptualizing figured worlds in this way offers a meso-level linkage between the macro and the micro aspects of social phenomena (Clarke, 2005). Clarke (2005) offers tools for mapping and analyzing the interplays between different aspects of social worlds/arenas, or what Holland et al. (1998) call “figured worlds.” Among the elements in Clarke’s tool box for analyzing social worlds/arenas are “universes of discourse,” “identities,” “primary activities,” “particular sites,” and “specialized knowledges” (p. 112).

The young artists of this research study are negotiating how they fit into various figured worlds including that of the arts. Clarke (2005) acknowledges the importance of the consideration of social worlds even when doing highly personalized research:

> Even if one's research project is using in-depth interviews to focus on individuals' lived experiences of something, the phenomenon of interest will be embedded in social worlds and arenas—scenes and sites of collective action. These social structural elements deserve articulation in project narratives, as they are fully present and quite consequential *in the situation* that the individuals are describing and in which their specific (inter)actions that are the focus of the research take place. (p. 123)

Hence, although this study is situated in the individual narrative portraits of young people, it is also inextricably located in figured worlds/social worlds. Therefore, the mapping of social worlds/figured worlds using situational analysis models is a useful methodological tool.

Positional Mapping

Clarke (2005) contends that "because *we and the people and things we choose to study* are all routinely both producing and awash in seas of discourses, analyzing only individual and collective human actors no longer suffices for many qualitative projects" (p. 145). Clarke (2005) defines "positional maps as simplification strategies for plotting positions articulated and not articulated in discourses" (p. 86). Mapping extant narrative discourses—that is, discourses that go beyond what is overtly spoken within interviews—those that inform the social worlds/arenas within which individual experiences and individual narratives exist is invaluable in delineating perspectives of representative research subjects. Clarke (2005) emphasizes that these are generalized positions. Positions in art education include statements such as "Artistic talent is inherited" or "Artistic skill is developed over years of study and practice" and "Art is a tool for social activism" or "Art is a tool for emotional therapy." These are positions taken by members of the social worlds. So, the young people will often use these positions/deploy these

perspectives as a way of situating themselves within the figured world of the arts. So, they might say that "Artistic talent is inherited" and then tell a story about how they inherited their artistic talent from their parents. The position that "Artistic talent is inherited" is a broad social discourse about artists. Yet, there is also a more personal narrative about one's experiences with this idea. Through these narratives, the broader discourses are lived and experienced.

Narrative Analysis

In this study, I utilized situational mapping, mapping of social worlds/arenas, and positional mapping (Clarke, 2005) to identify key themes in response to the central research questions of the study. Yet, these broad situational factors also exist within the lived and narrativized experiences of individuals. Narrative analysis is a means by which to explicate meaning using narratives from a variety of different sources—from the literary to everyday conversation to social media posts to formal research interviews (Riessman, 2008). In narrative analysis within social science research, the researcher identifies key narratives or stories within the data and utilizes this information to answer the research questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 2006; Czarniawska, 2004; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008; Mishler, 1986, 1990, 1999; Riessman, 1993, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Riessman (2008) identifies four subsets of narrative analysis: thematic analysis, structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis, and visual analysis. Using narrative analysis as an overarching approach, I focus on a thematic narrative analysis approach. Boyatzis (1998) describes thematic analysis a means of "encoding qualitative information" (p. vii) and it functions as a tactic for developing meaning out of complex data drawn from narratives. What is unique about thematic analysis within a narrative analysis framework, as compared to some other forms of qualitative

research analysis, is that narrative thematic analysis considers the context of the story within which key words and phrases are spoken within research data (Mishler, 1986, 1990, 1999; Riessman, 2008). Narrative analysis is not decontextualized. So, even though I code for certain phrases, I am always looking at them in context.

After the completion of this mapping, I engaged in narrative analysis of the data. Narrative analysis involves defining a meaningful unit of data as a story and using this vignette to highlight something that is relevant to the research questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1993, 2008). Thematic analysis within qualitative research involves analyzing data based upon emergent themes (Riessman, 2008). Narrative thematic analysis relates to grounded theory processes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in that themes are gleaned from data that were procured through open-ended collection methods. However, narrative thematic analysis differs from grounded theory in that it takes the context of the story into greater consideration (Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2008). Words and phrases spoken within interview contexts are less decontextualized and are analyzed within the context of the story within which they are expressed (Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2008). Relatedly, situational analysis extends the scope of grounded theory to examine broader situational factors (Clarke, 2005). By combining the tools of situational analysis with narrative analysis, I am to examine the myriad factors influencing artist identity formation in young people.

With narrative coding, words and phrases spoken within the collected data are analyzed in the context of the stories in which they are expressed (Saldaña, 2009). Thematic analysis within a narrative-oriented methodology such as portraiture involves analyzing data based upon emergent themes (Riessman, 2008). Following Riessman (2008), I engaged in thematic narrative analysis of the data that I collected through observations, interviews, and visual artifacts. I began

this thematic analysis by employing an initial round of “in vivo” coding. “In vivo” coding draws upon “the terms used by [participants] themselves" (Strauss, 1987, p. 33). Using “in vivo” coding, I identified key words and phrases that were used during the interview and then analyzed their use within the context of the narratives where they were employed. These key words and phrases informed the development of themes. Saldaña (2009) notes that a theme is “an *outcome* of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded” (p. 139). Thus, although I began with “in vivo” coding, I soon transitioned into seeking to align these codes with themes to ascribe meaning to these words and phrases as relevant to my research questions. There are times when “in vivo” coding of specific words is not enough. Sometimes, references to important information is hidden in unexpected places.

De Santis & Ugarriza (2000) describe a theme as “an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole” (p. 362). This “themeing the data” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 139) facilitates the development of “researcher-generated *theoretical constructs*” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 142). Saldaña (2009) calls this deliberate themes connection-making among the various components of data and analysis “codeweaving” (p. 36) and contends that this is a useful way to translate research data into theory. I drew upon the data to identify “in vivo” codes and used these codes to flesh out themes of relevance to the research questions and problems I am exploring. After this coding process was complete, I began further analysis where the coded themes were further developed into theories regarding factors that influence artist identity formation.

Aesthetic Whole: Presenting the Research

In keeping with the aesthetic inclinations of portraiture methodology, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis describe how a complete portraiture research project forms an *aesthetic whole* that communicates the overall picture that emerges from the research. Through this model, I conclude with a discussion of how portraiture methodology's concept of *aesthetic whole* is applicable to the overall presentation and conclusions of my research study presented with both visual and verbal elements.

I also connect this concept of "aesthetic whole" to the idea of examining the situational factors and seeking to illuminate a phenomenon in a contextualized manner. While many qualitative researchers seek to utilize data collected through methods such as interviews and observations to develop generalizable analysis, portraitists seek a balance between generalizability and particularity (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997). Indeed, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) advocate using portraiture methodology to create

> a generative tension…between organization and classification on one hand and maintaining the rich complexity of human experience on the other—the tension between developing discrete codes and searching for meaning, and the tension between the researcher's desire for control and coherence and the actors' reality of incoherence and instability (p. 192).

In using portraiture methodology, the particularities of experience are crucial to creating a more complete understanding of the phenomena of study at hand. This is another reason why a combined situational analysis with narrative analysis is appropriate for this study.

Although each of the elements of the research is intertwined, creating an *aesthetic whole,* I presented them as separate chapters to highlight specific aspects of the data. In the narrative portraits chapter, I curated the narratives of the young artists. Their own words thus formed descriptions of themselves so that they are seen not merely as anonymous sources for data about

artist identity and demonstrate that they are complex people who are consistently renegotiating who they are. In the contextual figured worlds chapter, I elaborated on how figured worlds act as contexts that shape the artist identity formation for the interns in the study. These contextual figured worlds include the CAC, New Orleans in the post-Katrina era and the political climate of the time. In the activities chapter, I described several key events from the study and consider the social practices that occur within these interactions between the interns and various other influences. Here, I show that the students have experienced the internship program not in insolation, but in a social way and that the identity work that they did in the program occurred within a social context. Within these activities, the interns deployed both physical artifacts like artwork or social media postings, and discursive artifacts such as the notion of the artist as eccentric or depressed, as they engage in day to day activities centered around the development of artistic selves. In the consequences chapter, I examine the outcomes of this artist identity work. The consequences may be very personal such as how the creation of art might help one to cope with emotional issues. Or, the consequences might be how art can act as a tool for social justice. Then again, there is the convergence of the social with the individual—the idea that the personal is political. Through this constellation of influences, identities are constantly imagined, presented, solidified, revised, and reconstructed.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVE SELF-PORTRAITS

In this chapter, I present narrative self-portraits that illustrate how artist identity work manifests in personal narratives. These portraits are representations of self-creating identity work, expressed through narratives. Narrating one's story is both personal and public. As Bruner (1987) writes: "the story of one's own life is, of course, a privileged but troubled narrative in the sense that it is reflexive: the narrator and the central figure in the narrative are the same" (p. 693). Hence, telling one's own narrative provides an intimate "privileged" perspective, but also a narrative that is also "troubled" because it requires one to take a difficult step back and act as a critical and reflexive observer of one's own life. In constructing these narratives with the participants, I acknowledge that my own story is inevitably intertwined with my presentation of their narratives because I have asked specific questions of them, I have identified passages that I found most meaningful, and I have composed their narratives to tell the story that I aimed to tell in this research. Although these narratives are self-portraits of the interns, they are also reflections of my own troubled yet privileged self-portrait.

As I worked on these narrative self-portraits, I became conflicted about whether or not to include my own interjections through my questions and conversations with the interns, through my personal reflections and connections to the interns, and/or my analytical perspectives on what the interns expressed. I wrote some of my initial portraits as descriptions of the dialogue that I had with the participants during our interviews and interjected my own commentary throughout the portraits. And, yet, upon reading the portraits written in this way, typical of social science research, I found them to be unsatisfactory.

One of my main goals with these portraits was to demonstrate how this group of young people tell their stories as artists in a relatively uninterrupted space and I felt as if my own analytical voice along with intermittent notations of "he said" and "she replied" took away from the narrative flow of the writing. Because I was aiming to represent narratives of the artist identity journeys of the participants, even though I acknowledge that I guided the interviews through my questioning, I felt that my own interruptions in the presentation of the portraits were not needed because I felt that I was not a significant part of their stories and thus should not take such a central role in their telling. After much revision and reflection, I decided to take my interjections out of the portraits of the interns. Instead, I have taken the words of the young people and put them into narrative form where they are not interrupted by my questions or my analysis. Their words are taken nearly verbatim from the interviews that I did with them, but I curated them, and in some cases, rearranged them within the body of the text for greater clarity and flow of ideas. For the most part, the results are that the young people tell their life stories through a past, present, future narrative arc. My interviews with the interns, like most of the components of the internship, functioned as artist identity work, positioning them away or towards identification as artists. This decision was partly a political decision—an attempt to fulfill portraiture methodology's focus on "voice" within the research process and in representations of research participants (Chapman, 2007; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The decision was also partly an aesthetic choice. In alignment with portraiture's consideration of the "aesthetic whole" of a research project (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), I formed these portraits as if they were narrative self-portraits.

I interviewed nine interns: Tristan, James, Cecilia, Lucy, Joey, Jasmine, Rose, Lily, Alex Jasmine, and Alex. Their narratives, set aside in italics, comprise the central portraits. At the

start of each of these portraits, I offer my own description of each of the participants to allow the reader to picture them through salient features such as their clothing, their hair, their personality, their gender, and their race. There were other interns that I did not interview, but whom I observed during the internship: Alyssa Lauren, Alyssa, Clara, Olivia, Natalie, Nora, Erica, and Jordan. For these interns, because most of them were active participants in the internship and I refer to them at various points within the dissertation, I briefly describe their positionalities at the end of this chapter.

To begin, I include my own narrative portrait of my trajectory through my identification with the arts. Bruner (1987) writes of life narratives: "Given their constructed nature and their dependence upon the cultural conventions and language usage, life narratives obviously reflect the prevailing theories about 'possible lives' that are part of one's culture" (p. 694). Following Bruner, I acknowledge that these portraits are incomplete and unfinished and that they are constructed within a range of constraints. They are my impressions of the young artists that I encountered in the summer of 2016, and as such, they are reflections of myself, guided by my inquiry as researcher as much as they are representations of the interns.

Sarah

From Kindergarten through 8th grade, I attended Audubon Montessori School, a public magnet school in New Orleans. We did not have a general art teacher for the whole school, but we often incorporated art into projects that we worked on. In our classes, we did a lot of book reports and research projects where we included drawings, paintings, or dioramas to go with our written work. One of my earliest memories of being recognized as a visual artist was by Ms. Brenda Huffstutler, my 4th, 5th, and 6th grade teacher. I think this may have started with the

portrait of Clara Barton, the nurse who founded the American Red Cross, that I drew for a class report. I remember Ms. Brenda hung the picture on the wall and I was very proud of this. I don't know if I would have become formally involved in the visual arts on my own, but once I was recognized as a "certain kind of person," an "art person" by teachers and peers at school, I began to develop and cultivate this identity. Being recognized in this way by others made me feel that there was something exceptional about me. It also gave me a source of comfort, knowing that I could use art to express things without fear and hesitation. This was very important to me, and a source of great solace, because, as a child, I was painfully shy in speaking. When I realized that I could use visual art, and also writing, to express my complex feelings and experiences, I felt that I had found a space where I could feel confident.

In 6th grade, after being recommended by Ms. Brenda, I took a "test" to become a Talented in the Arts-Visual (TAV) student. For this test, my mother took me to an administrative building where I entered a room with about 10 other students, most of whom were Black, from schools from around the city. We watched a slide show with some examples of artworks and answered multiple-choice questions about these artworks. Then, we were asked to make a drawing with a pencil and a sheet of white paper. I remember that I drew a forest with birds flying about. I noticed that many of the other students were drawing cartoonish characters and I felt superior that I was drawing something that was more "original." Thinking back, I'm sure this elitist attitude had a racial element to it. I somehow knew that this striving towards "originality" and away from pop culture references in drawing was valued in determining "talent" in the arts. This was before I had any idea about theories around visual culture in art education. Yet, this hierarchical view of different types of art and artists was already engrained

into my 6th grade mind. Soon after this evaluation, I was accepted into the TAV program—I was officially identified as talented in the visual arts.

Once I was in the TAV program, I had my first art teacher, Ms. Freddie Marler. Being in the TAV program meant that I was able to attend classes with a small group of other students who had been identified as talented in the visual arts with Ms. Freddie. With this program, I also had opportunities to show my artwork around the city of New Orleans—at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC), New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA), at Canal Place, and to enter city-wide competitions, such as one hosted by New Orleans Magazine where I won honorable mention for my watercolor of St. Louis Cathedral, a New Orleans landmark. Being able to access those moments of recognition of self as artist were key to my identity development as an artist. Because of repeated flooding in my homes growing up New Orleans (not just from Hurricane Katrina), I do not have much of my childhood artwork. One of the only surviving artworks I still have from my childhood is a painting of a Mardi Gras float, only slightly moldy because it had been covered in plastic for display in an art show by Ms. Freddie.

I continued to study art throughout high school, although I opted to remove myself from the TAV program because I wanted to work with the "regular" art teacher, Mr. Ted Calas at Ben Franklin High School, because, after a rotation of three different TAV teachers within a few months' time, I longed for the opportunity for greater stability in my art classes and I thought that if I took classes with Mr. Calas, I would be better able to develop my representational drawing and painting skills and become a "better" artist. For my undergraduate studies, I applied to only two schools: Pratt Institute, an art school in New York, and Tulane University in New Orleans where my mother worked. Although I was accepted into both schools, I ended up

staying in New Orleans and attending Tulane where I majored in Art Studio with a concentration in printmaking and African and African Diaspora Studies.

In 2004, I began working as a TAV teacher in New Orleans public schools, where I traveled between several different campuses teaching art to TAV students. In May 2005, the Talented in the Arts programs—Visual, Music, and Theatre—presented the work of our students in a public show at the CAC for the "Festival of the Arts." I carefully matted the work of my students, ensuring that at least one from each school was represented. I had two portraits of Malcolm X, one from a 3rd grader and one from an 8th grader from Andrew Jackson Elementary School. One student from Frantz Elementary School painted a recreation of a work from Romare Bearden's *Odysseus* series. A student from Florence Chester Elementary School created a drawing based upon the illustrations by Leo and Diane Dillon in Virginia Hamilton's (1993) *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*. A student from Thomas Edison Elementary School did an abstract chalk drawing. None of my students showed up to the CAC for this event. Although my TAV students had been identified as artistically talented and had interests in art, it seemed to me that access to arts institutions like the CAC remained somewhat elusive.

In August 2005, I was beginning my second year of teaching art in the TAV program in New Orleans schools, excited to start the new school year off with some newly-identified students. A few days after classes began, Hurricane Katrina tragically and deeply impacted our world in ways we could have never anticipated, leaving the city 80% underwater for weeks. I was among those who were lucky enough to evacuate a day ahead of time. As I watched with horrified uncertainty from afar, I realized that my life would never be the same. As time went by and with the knowledge that nearly all of the schools where I had been teaching were completely destroyed, I decided to look for other prospects. It was during this time that I applied to a MA in

Art Education program at the University of Texas at Austin and then, promptly moved to Austin, Texas to begin a new path. After completing my degree, I taught in a public school outside of Austin for a couple of years. I later moved back to New Orleans and in 2011, I began working as a TAV and general art teacher at Audubon, now a charter school. When I brought my Audubon students to NOMA for an art show, "Becoming Artfully Aware" in 2012, most of them showed up. Many of their parents were teachers at Audubon or professors at Tulane, or other members of the professional class in New Orleans. Although I loved working at Audubon, my interest in pursuing a PhD continued to linger in my thoughts and I applied to programs in various fields: American Studies, Art History, Anthropology, and to one program in Art Education at the University of North Texas, where I was accepted into the PhD in Art Education program and where I have nearly completed my studies.

The CAC has been a place of affirmation for me, of my identity as an artist and as an art educator, and now, as a researcher. Over the years, my memories of the CAC blur together between my own experiences of being a young person who was showing an artwork or doing a dance performance with my memories of being a teacher who was showing the work of my students. As I reflect on my own positive arts experiences within this space, I also think about how not every young artist has the same opportunities or feels as if they "belong" in institutional art spaces like the CAC. I have often thought about why my pre-Katrina TAV students did not come to their art show at the CAC and I wonder: If I had done more as their art teacher, would my students have come to the show? Would my students and their parents have felt comfortable in this space? Or, did they reject this space? Was this art show really for them—or was it merely a spectacle for the elites of New Orleans to congratulate themselves for celebrating the arts in public schools, when many of the young artists themselves were not even there to

experience the moment? Would their presence at the show have altered the course of their lives as artists? Would seeing their artwork on the walls of the CAC have solidified their identities as artists?

Tristan

Tristan is a male who identifies as Black as well as White—biracial. When I first met Tristan, he had dyed-blond hair, but by the end of the internship, he had shaved off his hair. On the day of our interview, Tristan wore a khaki Adidas baseball cap, a red and black patterned soccer jersey, black shorts, and Adidas sneakers. He was often wearing a pair of ear bud headphones and often discussed his love of music. Tristan is enrolled in a specialized visual arts program at his highly selective charter school, but his artistic interests are widely multidisciplinary. In addition to working the visual arts, he creates music, writes, and designs clothing. With his wide range of artistic interests and ambitions, Tristan exudes creative energy.

> Everyone is an artist in a way. If you're creating something and people are getting things out of it, if you're helping people out in a certain way, you're an artist. Plain and simple. An artist is someone who inspires people without actually trying to. You're just doing what you do and people like it just because it's you. It's just pure you. Music, clothing design, writing: I just like to create things. I don't like to just be a robot and follow along with things. I like to have fun and sit down and do my thing. I know for sure that visual arts will be incorporated with it, but I don't know if that's going to be the main thing. I want to keep moving and make things that people enjoy and people can gain inspiration from. Mastering visual arts, mastering music, mastering making clothing, mastering writing, that all will help me. They all work together. It's good to stay busy, but at times it can be hard because with all the ideas in my head, it's hard to get them all out.
>
> I've always been into art and creating things, but I didn't start taking it seriously until 8th grade, when I took an art class. I remember there was this guy that I drew. He

was looking into the distance and there were these different objects floating in the background and my teacher said that it was really good. I was like, "Really? You think it's good? I didn't know that this was good." That's what really started it all. When people actually started to notice it. It made me more confident and made me want to actually pursue it. It empowers you. It was like, as a person it is good to have that self-confidence, but you also need recognition from other people to bring you up.

More recently, people have been telling me that they've been looking up to me and I'm like, "Wait, you look up to me? I'm a person, too. Why do you look up to me?" Celebrities will say the same thing, like, "Why do you look up to me?" I feel as if I'm sort of like a localized celebrity. Not to everyone, but certain people will tell me that they look up to me. This girl was like, "When I grow up, I want to be like you." I was like, "Wait. What? Why?" And she was like, "You're just cool. You're laid very back, and you don't care about what people say." I get where they're coming from because I fanboy over so many artists and so many music producers and rappers and stuff like that. If I got the chance to meet any of them, I would go crazy.

Visual arts-wise, I really like Basquiat and Shepard Fairey and also Keith Haring. I get a lot of inspiration from those people specifically because their art is so wild and out there. It's not the typical art. It's out there. That's how I am. All my stuff is out there. People ask, "Where did you get that idea?" I'm like, "I don't know. It's just there." I like to have my own style towards it. I guess my art makes people think a lot more. It also makes them happy because I use a lot of vibrant colors and bright colors in my art. My work is not necessarily activist because I'm not really working for another person. I'm working to express my own thoughts. Of course, when you get into social activism, you'll create things to go along with the issue you're talking about, but it's not like, "I need to be socially active right now. I need to go create that at the moment." You're just sitting there drawing what you're thinking about.

Learning about all of the social activism and stuff like that, that's really helping me because I've been trying to become a social activist and getting everything out there and actually coming and workshopping with it, the creative writing workshops today, that kind of stuff is really helping me. That's why I came to this. I didn't come for the people. I came for that. With all those social issues up there on the poster on the wall, I can't

personally relate to a lot of them because although I am Black, I am, I'm also White as well. I'm mixed. So, a lot of things don't apply to me. So, it's hard for me to connect to all of them.

My dad, he does ornamental ironwork and he makes fences and stuff for people. Also, we went to a family reunion and we found out that our last name means "skilled with your hands." Once I found that out, I was like, "Hey, this is crazy—I do art." My parents want me to succeed in what I'm doing. But, my dad is so stuck on me having to get a job and stuff like that. I don't believe in getting a 9-5 and going to that every day. Both of my parents, they'll wake up and I'll see them go, "Ugh, I have to go to work." Why would you want to wake up and be miserable every day?

It's good to get out of your hometown and live somewhere else. Being under the roof and comfort of my parents, it's good that I have that kind of care and love, but they need to let go at some point. I haven't been to New York before, but I have a place that I really want to visit, and I want to go to school at Pratt Institute really badly, but I've also been considering, "Hey, what if that doesn't work out?" I have to have my Plan B. I want to go to NYU, Bard, or Pratt. If New York doesn't work out, then I want to go to California.

I honestly don't think about challenges as much because I know I can complete it. I like to be optimistic about everything. People are like, "You need to be realistic." I'm like, "I am being realistic because I know I can do it." You can't tell me that, "You're dreaming too much." What? How can you dream too much? I know I can do it. So, I'm going to think about it like that. If you don't take risks, then your life is boring. You need to have fun and be in the moment. You can't live thinking about what's going to happen the next second all the time. You need to live in the moment.

James

James is a White male with short, wavy brown hair, who identifies as gay. He has an outgoing and enthusiastic personality. James was an eager participant in the research study. He was also a strong ambassador for the CAC because he had involved in many aspects of their teen

programming in recent years. James had recently graduated from a co-educational Catholic school and was preparing to go to college at a state school in Louisiana. During our interview, James was wearing a long black and white striped button up shirt over a black t-shirt, denim shorts, and black Nike sneakers. James expressed interest in a wide range of artistic practices including visual arts, photography, theatre, dance, and film.

> As a kid, I wanted to be a marine biologist. So, I think my family expected that, "Finally, we're going to have a kid that makes all this money and that money goes back into the family." Then, I was like, "Just kidding. I want to be an artist." They were like, "Ugh." I think the change was kind of harsh for them. There's been the occasional time where they've pushed me to slightly change the direction that I want to go within art to be more profitable, which I completely understand. It's not coming out of a place of hate for my job. It's just they really want what's best for me. However, I've come to understand how I feel about the job that I want to have. I know deep down inside that I would rather be on the streets doing what I love than be in a big, nice house doing something that I hate every day.
>
> Both of my big sisters were really into visual arts. At the time that I can first remember experiencing art, I wanted to be good at art just because they were. So, I would draw a lot. My mom would always say, "It's in our blood" or something like, "It must have been genetic" because all three of us were pretty decent at visual arts for never having classes. I liked it when I was little, but I liked it in a very different way. I never even thought of it as a job opportunity. I thought that being an artist was like people wanting to be a princess or "I want to be an astronaut." I didn't even think of it as an actual plan, which is where the idea to become a marine biologist came in. As I started to meet people in the arts and as I started to surround myself with other artists, I started to realize that's where I belong.
>
> I have very complicated feelings a lot, especially, I feel like now at the age that I'm currently in. There are a lot of feelings that I would like to express to people because keeping them bottled up just makes them so much more apparent. It's something that I can't really describe with words. Being able to piece it together with art on my own

straight from my head onto a canvas or onto a film or into photography or dance, it's a way that when I finish the project, I can show this to someone and say, "This is how I'm feeling" and it's so much easier and clearer for me. Every time I take emotions out of that bottle and create new art with it, it's freeing up space for me to be calmer and take on everyday life.

I went through a lot of different phases. I started out really into visual arts. However, when I tried to put the picture in my head down on paper and it didn't come out as it was in my head, I would just get so stressed out. I wouldn't want to draw anymore. I knew a lot of artists and they were going through the same thing and it made them want to try harder. So, I was like, "I don't really think this is for me." Then, I moved into dance, which I really liked. There was a little less of that, but I was still feeling like my standards of the dance art were too high for my actual experience level. I feel like a lot of people go through that, but it's having the passion to push you through that period. Then, I moved into film very recently and I completely have that passion to push through every film. Every picture that I do, I see the flaws in it, but I'm excited to change them for the next project. I really feel like that's where I belong. I kind of do wish I would have found that earlier, but I do feel like my visual arts phase and my dance phase has prepared me for film in a way because I use both of those things in my films and photography and it's definitely prepared m0e in terms of just thinking creatively. I really want to make music videos. I'm not very good at expressing things with my words. So, I want to do that with art. I really like music videos because it's a music track and there's no dialogue involved. All of it is just pure film. It's just pure emotion and dancing or whatever you have incorporated into it and it's almost a moving art piece to music. I like cutting those words out and having the pure emotion that comes with that.

Rainy Days, a short film created in this internship was about LGBTQ+ rights. Not all of us were in that community. So, even though it was initially about LGBTQ+ rights, there was one thing that we could all relate to and all use that passion to drive us to make the project and that was that we've all been looked at as weird for being creative or for expressing ourselves. Learning to express yourselves no matter what anyone else thinks and being yourself and hated for it rather than not doing it and people liking you:

we took that idea and ran with it. I think being a member of the LGBTQ+ community has influenced me in only a positive way. It's made me grow a lot because, in both my art practice and my LGBTQ+ personal life. I've gotten those comments of, "Maybe you should tone this down a little bit and maybe people will start to like it more or people will start to accept it more." I've combined those to say, "It's not just because being gay is bad or it's not just because having this certain type of artwork is bad or being weird is bad. It's the people who are being negative and not yourself. As long as you're not hurting anyone, being yourself should always be okay." I think they've fed off of each other and pushed each other to express myself more and be myself and be confident, which I still struggle with, but I'm growing and learning more that caring less about what people think makes less stress for myself.

I definitely want to bring in activism to my art, or not necessarily activism, but more "art for change," but I don't necessarily want to use a specific movement like the LGBTQ+ rights or Black Lives Matter or anything like that. I want it to be relating to myself and what I've gone through as a person and reaching out to people who have gone through similar things, not necessarily a certain group of people. It's been amazing being involved at the CAC. Everyone here really cares about artists because they are artists and they were in our place at one time. They're realistic about what's going to happen, but they never shut down your dreams or de-validate them or anything like that.

Cecilia

Cecilia is a bold and ambitious female artist. She has light brown skin and long wavy dark brown hair and identifies as Hispanic. Cecilia has a sophisticated fashion sense and often wears jewel-toned attire in luxurious fabrics like cashmere and corduroy. Today, she wears high-heeled black boots, a navy blue and red striped tank top, and a maroon corduroy skirt. Cecilia recently graduated from an all-girls Catholic school and discussed challenges she has encountered in revealing her identification as someone on the LGBTQ+ spectrum to her conservative family. She is becoming increasingly self-assured in her artistic choices—she is

involved in multiple artistic forms including film, photography, visual art, fashion design, interior design, and music.

> I kind of do everything. When people ask me, "So, what do you do?" I'm like, "I can do everything." I sound like, "Oh, I'm good at everything," but it's true because since I was little because my mom was an art teacher, I've always grown up around art and I've never not been surrounded by art. At first, I was going to be a fashion designer and all I did was draw designs. I had my heart set. I was like, "I'm going to be a designer. I'm going to do this." Then, I wanted to do interior design. Then, I started doing more paintings and drawings, but since my senior year, I started getting more into photography and film. My love of music and going to concerts really evolved since I was a junior. So, I started focusing on concert photography and film. That's what my main focus is right now, but with film, it's an art form where you can combine everything. You can combine fashion design. You can combine photography. You can combine music in it. You can combine basically anything. Film right now is my main art discipline because it's all of it put together.
>
> This is supposed to be myself (see Figure 4.1). It's a head and the inside of the brain is an open box with all different types of art that I like. It says, "Everything you can imagine is real," which is a quote by Picasso showing that artists have different minds and really think differently than other people and it shows that we think outside the box. It's an open box. Every week, Stella asks us, "What is something you want to do when you're older?" I feel like my answer is always different, but it's all the same. One day, I mentioned film and photography. Last week, I mentioned how I still like fashion and everybody looked at me like, "Wait, no, that's not what you said." It's all the same. It all comes together. There's not really a limit to what you can do with art. It's all bits and pieces of different art forms put together and that's why I like doing it because I'm not limited in anything that I do. I drew a camera, a music note, and a journal because over the past four years, my life has really revolved around going to concerts and shows and music is something that helps me connect with people and I like to write songs, and, it has a broken heart because I use my experiences to write (see Figure 4.2). Art is just a personal experience for me. I do it to get my feelings out and to send a message.

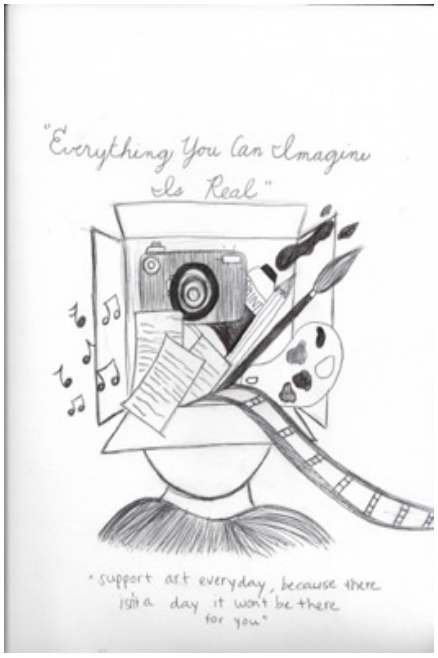

Figure 4.1. Cecilia's self-representation.

Figure 4.2. Cecilia's object drawing.

When I was little, my mom would make me carry around a sketchbook everywhere I went. It started when I was about four years old. Because of this, I have really good cursive handwriting. Everyone was like, "How did you do that?" Because my mom would make me carry around my notebook and she would teach me a new letter every day and then when I was done doing my letters, she would make me sketch and do

everything around me. People think, “Oh, you’re born with your skill.” I don’t think that’s true. It honestly just has to do with practice and how much effort you put into it. Since I started at a young age, I think that’s why I have the skill that I have today. I used to have that mindset, “Oh, my mom’s an artist. Oh, I’m born with the gene.” I don’t think that’s true.

In this internship, the activist project was my favorite because I did the LGBTQ+ community acceptance video—Rainy Days. A lot of people don’t know why I involve myself in activism for LGBTQ+ rights and how much I support it, especially my parents. Only a few of my friends know about it. And, I’ve always wanted to make a video. I think especially because the people here are actually members of that group, I think it was a very fulfilling moment to actually get to do that. It’s a personal issue for me. It’s something that, that like I said, not a lot of people know that I can see myself on some spectrum of the LGBTQ+ community, although labels overwhelm me. I think the whole idea of it, why people don’t accept people for just something as simple as loving somebody, is outdated. People are trying to throw away the importance of the need to continue to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights and say, “Oh, just get over it. Gay marriage is legalized. Everything’s solved,” which is totally not true because people still go through it every day where people try to wash away their pride. That was the whole idea of the umbrella symbol from the film. It was all the mean comments and everything where the rain washing away their colors and trying to take away that pride and make them feel bad for being proud of who they are.

I have two sisters: a twin and my older sister. My older sister is similar to me, but she’s more towards the whole television and theater aspect of it and she likes to sing, but she’s also a visual artist. My parents are all disappointed because my twin sister wants to be a doctor. They’re like, “Oh, my God, why don’t you try harder like your sister and be a doctor and be all perfect? Why don’t you do something important?” I’m like, “I am doing something important.” Music is important to me. All this stuff is important to me and I’m trying. You don’t know how I message people every day trying to get jobs. Artists… They don’t understand, you can’t just apply for a job and get it. You have to be lucky when you’re an artist. You have to find a way to share your stuff. My family would, say, “Oh, what are you doing for college?” “Art.” They’re like, “That’s not a real

major." "What do you want me to do? You're telling me to go out and do something that I like and now you're telling me it's not real. It's not a real job."

Performers are the most vulnerable because they literally go out on stage and you see their emotion and they're just pouring it out in front of thousands of people. When I was little, I wanted to be a singer. Even though I like singing and I like all that stuff, I'm not that, I can admit to myself I'm not that great. I still love music and everything. When I got through a time where I was going through a lot of stuff, I really gave up on music, especially playing the piano. I used to be really good at it, but it's hanging on a thread and I kind of gave up on it. I realized if I really can't motivate myself to get back into that because it's really hard with music. If I have the passion for it and I have the creativity, I want to somehow be behind the scenes and I want to help. I have a lot of friends who are musicians and I want to be there. I want to support them in some way.

Lucy

Lucy is a White female with long, wavy dark brown hair who identifies as queer and as bisexual. On the day of our interview, Lucy was wearing a black and white striped dress with a blue long-sleeved oxford shirt tied around her waist, and grey Keds sneakers. Lucy's art form of focus is the visual arts and she has been a part of the Talented in the Arts-Visual program since elementary school. Lucy and I went to the same schools from Kindergarten through high school: Audubon and Franklin, two of the elite public schools in New Orleans. Lucy's art took a decidedly activist stance and she often discussed her interest in using art as a tool for social justice—particularly in the struggles for LGBTQ+ rights and for the Black Lives Matter movement. Although we were years apart in age, I identified with a lot of Lucy's experiences growing up in New Orleans.

I think it was last summer the first time I had done anything involving the CAC and I think my mom might have found it for me. I was kind of at the age where you're a little too old for camp and a little too young for a real job and so I was looking for some

kind of program that was camp counselor-esque and I think my mom found the program for me and that's how I started doing this. There are three different things you can participate in. One of them is the Zine Board where you're an editor for the zine and you go through submissions and you help put it together. There's the Teen Leadership Council and you organize some of the youth-focused events at the CAC. And, then there's the Exhibition Board, where you act as the curators for the exhibition of teen art that goes up later in the year.

The most memorable thing for me would probably be during the year when I was working on the zine, just going through all the submissions of kids from all around the city from all different schools. I didn't realize what a large and talented community of young artists there were in this city. My parents were both very radical young people who were very into the arts. I remember when I was coming back from the first zine meeting and they were like, "No, no, no, we know what zines are, trust us." They were definitely involved in the arts scene, especially the activist arts scene when they were younger, probably a little older than me, but they're definitely very supportive of me.

I've been in the TAV [Talented in the Arts-Visual] program since I was in 1st grade. So, I've been doing it for quite a while. I've gone to public school my whole life. So, definitely my elementary/middle school was not particularly well-funded and so, when I wanted to do art there it was kind of difficult because we didn't have access to the best materials or enough materials or we didn't have the best workspace. So, that made it kind of difficult to make art at school. At home, I'm lucky enough that my parents are able and willing to buy me the art supplies that I want and need.

I use my art to shine light upon issues, such as homophobia, that affect me directly or that affect those around me. So, for my piece of activist art, I did a series of two posters that had a Marsha P. Johnson quote, who is a very famous trans and LGBTQ+ activist from the Stonewall era. It's, "No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us." I focused on the social issue of LGBTQ+ rights for my activist art project because I am part of the community as a queer person. Also, I think it is fairly relevant with the recent Orlando shooting[1]. I wanted to focus on that aspect of it because

[1] On June 12, 2016, there was a mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida in which 49 people were killed and 53 people were injured (The New York Times, 2016).

I've always been interested in the Stonewall-era activism like Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson and people like them and I had always found that quote to be really powerful and I wanted to incorporate it into a piece of art, but I never really found the time or the proper outlet for it. I thought it made a very powerful statement and I wanted to use it in my art to really tell people, just because gay marriage was legalized last summer, it doesn't mean that we can really have true liberation and true pride because, as you can see, this shooting happened months ago. Clearly, we don't have equality yet.

I think the aspect of my identity as a queer person affects my art because I feel like, as someone in the queer community, we experience a lot of discrimination and violence and attacks that take place against the community very frequently and I feel like that really lends itself to activist art as a subject and also as a woman, the same is true. Also, I do consider myself an ally to the African American community and people of colors community, especially to the Black Lives Matter movement. I feel like that is a very good subject for activist art that can really make a statement that needs to be heard. Art makes me feel empowered when I'm doing something related to a political issue that I'm really getting my point across and getting my opinion across and calling out injustice where I see it.

I've always been a huge fan of Keith Haring. Definitely Basquiat has been one of my favorites. He kind of ties in with Keith Haring. I'm definitely into people who are very stylized, who know what they're doing. If they've got their own personal style, I've always been a fan of that. Keith Haring, I do like the political aspects of his art, but also the shapes have always really drawn me in because they're very simple, but also, I feel they really say something, even though they're very simple figures or shapes or just a few words. I feel like his art always says a lot without using a lot. And, then, Basquiat, I just think he makes really beautiful art. A lot of people would find it to be almost primitive or childish because of his brush strokes and it would almost be considered messy, but I think it's really beautiful art and I definitely think it says a lot when you understand his background and what he's coming from.

For a while, I was interested in going to art school and then I realized I might not be as invested in art as I first thought I was. I really love art. It's one of my main passions, but I realize that dedicating all my time to art would limit me a lot because I'm

interested in a lot more things. I realize that I'm not as dedicated to art as someone who's pursuing their education in art would be. I feel like if I tried to go to art school, I would realize that maybe art isn't exactly my passion or my main passion because as much as I do love it, I'm interested in so many other things. I feel like I don't want to limit myself in that way because I'd still like to pursue it, but not exclusively. I'm honestly not really sure what I want to study in college, but I am interested in archeology and anthropology and also psychology. Mostly just the humanities in general is something I'm interested in.

Honestly, I don't really know if I consider myself an artist because I think, in the technical sense, I am an artist. I'm a person who does art. But, I don't personally consider myself an artist because I've always thought of that as an art professional. So, I guess, I personally wouldn't consider myself an artist. Because I have had the idea that an artist is someone who really does dedicate their whole life to art. That's what they do all the time, professionally, that's who they are, and I feel like, even though I do dedicate a lot of myself and my time to art, I feel like I'm almost too young to consider myself an artist. I'm a kid in high school. That's not what I do. I am someone who makes art, but I don't know if I can really call myself an artist yet, just yet.

Joey

Joey is a White male with a confident and open demeanor who identifies as bisexual. He attends an all-boys Catholic school. His main artistic focus is in theatre, but he also creates visual art. He has short, shaggy brown hair and on most days, he wears pink wire rim eyeglasses, blue tennis shoes with pink laces, and blue jeans with graphic t-shirts. On the day of our interview, he is wearing blue jeans, a grey t-shirt with a picture of a pink and yellow cat (his favorite animal), Keds shoes with tie-dye patterns, and a rainbow-colored bracelet.

I usually think of myself as a theatre artist, but I love visual art. I love drawing, but it's not all I can do. I like writing, but I'm not great at it and I don't usually spend my time writing. For the activist art project, because I felt more at home with doing a musical

and there wasn't one that fit what I wanted it to be for the issue that I wanted to focus on, I just wrote one. It was about LGBTQ+ rights, but more specifically, for a gay male. It poses the problem of "gay" being accepted in society. It's viewed as a bad thing to be gay. I used Beatles songs because they have a lot of songs about love and a lot of them can be interpreted as gay love. It was a lot of fun. I didn't get an amazing response out of it, but someone did tell me afterwards that mine was the best and that's really satisfying to see that I put a lot of work into it and to see that it was appreciated. Just to have someone who says, "I like what you do" is great because I know, at least with me, when I do any kind of art, I put a lot of myself into it. If I'm drawing, even if I'm drawing just something small in five seconds, if someone says, "That's cool," it's nice to hear because you did put thought into that and having someone recognize fuels you to do more of it because you realize that it's not bad. Someone likes it.

Part of theatre is dance and I once mentioned at dinner with my grandparents that I wish that all the kids in our theatre troupe wanted dance to become, you could either take P.E. or ballet and my grandmother got upset by that, saying that wasn't boyish. The last person I ever expected to defend that was my dad because I feel like he is the "manly man," but the dance director who does ballet and does all the shows at my school is one of his classmates from back in the day. One of his old friends teaches ballet all over town and does all our dance choreography for our shows. So, he defended that he had a friend that, it's okay to do ballet. So, my parents are supportive of what I do. They always show up, especially my sister, my mom, my dad. They're always there. My grandparents come to see my shows, but the only thing I've ever experienced was just that one time at dinner.

I've never really wanted to do any kind of activist art. My art is usually just fluffy cats. Not fluffy cats that support anything or put down anything else. I am sure I could make it that way, but at least when I draw something, I'm not thinking about an issue. There are some artists who put this deep, poetic meaning behind something and that's just never been me. I never put a deep meaning behind whatever I do. I just like drawing for fun or acting for fun, singing for fun. Just giving this activist approach, it's great, just not my thing.

I'm, of course, a feminist, Black Lives Matter, gay rights… I care about all these issues, but there's just so many people out there that are equipped and know more about the issues and can fight for them more than I can. I will support, but I don't like causing trouble in the first place, especially about something I don't… I can't argue it. I just don't know enough about it. I just know that I feel this way. I feel that this is right. I wouldn't really be going around doing an activist project, but I would go to see an activist project to support. I just know that showing up always helps. Just being there for anyone. If you see something, being able to notice it and call it out and try to correct whoever you see. At school, whenever I heard someone say a gay slur, I get in their face and I ask them what their problem is with it. Because sometimes it's just engrained in society today. All the sexism and all the racism and all the non-equality that exists today, especially at the school I go to. You see a lot of it and just informing because so many people just don't know. Not only do they not know about the issues, they don't know that what they're doing is not helping and they're going against that. They're being unequal and discriminating even though they don't realize it. So, just informing someone that that is not okay. That is detrimental. Showing them where they stand is important.

I've told all my friends. I don't make it a part of who I am. I mean, it is a part of who I am, but I don't go around saying, "I'm bisexual" because you don't go around saying, "I'm heterosexual" or "I'm homosexual." It's just not important, usually, but if it comes up in a conversation, I'm not going to deny it or be like, "No, that's not true." I'll say it. I know being bisexual has given me a different outlook on society and made me hate people lots more just because you see hatred. But I don't know the true extent of sexism because it doesn't get me. I don't know the true extent of racism. I see it, but it doesn't affect me, personally. So, I wouldn't be able to know what that's truly like. But, when you feel hatred against all gay people, I am part of that and so I do get the feeling of what that is like.

My dad's a lawyer. My mom's a teacher. But, my sister directs. She was a theatre major and she directs shows. She's up in New York right now getting, I can't remember what they're called, director points, basically. She's a stage manager, but you get these director points for doing shows and once you do enough, you get enough of these points, bigger jobs open up, and eventually, Broadway and stuff like that. She has

another job right now, but right now she's just doing a small show. But, it'll build up and up, hopefully. So, yeah, I always liked following her.

But, I don't like New York at all. I think it's a place of broken dreams because everyone goes there. I know there are people at my school who are better singers and actors than I am. Going to New York, I'd find hundreds of people who have something I don't. That I just can't compete with. I know there always could be an opportunity, but Broadway or whatever has never been something that I would want to do. I wouldn't want to do that. I'd want to do just small shows at some theatre for fun. I like city life. I don't want big city life. The hustle and bustle of New York stresses me out. I intend to study theatre in college, but probably not as a full-time career. I honestly haven't come to what I might want. I like criminal law, but not really. I've always wanted to do veterinary studies or dentistry, maybe. I'm all over the place. I want to get into Tulane, but… At least for my family, money is not the issue, it's just actual grades. My GPA is not where it needs to be. But, if not Tulane, then, Loyola, probably.

Jasmine

Jasmine is a visual artist who consistently demonstrates a determined consciousness around her identity as an artist who works for social justice. She identifies as a Black female. Jasmine has a feminine style of dress and is often wearing sparkly or shiny clothing, shoes, and accessories. On her first day at the internship, she wore black capri leggings, black shiny patent leather flat shoes, and a pink t-shirt adorned with black lace on the shoulders with the text: "All of me Loves all of You," lyrics from the John Legend song, All of Me, and a sparkly headband in her medium-length black hair. She attends New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), a specialized public arts high school in New Orleans for half of each school day. She also attends St. Mary's Academy, an historically Black, all-girls Catholic high school, for the other half of each school day.

Our experiences are what shape our thoughts, our character, and our lives. I see my life not only through personal experiences, but also through historical and current events to create a better future. I see my past as slavery, a historical event that shaped and built the very foundation of our nation. It was a dreadful, realistic past that I study in order to understand the experiences of my ancestors. My present is the era I live in today and what I experience daily such as police brutality, "micro-aggressions," and other forms of racism and sexism. Through these events, I shape my future through my talents as a way to combat this harsh reality. In the future, I want my artwork to touch the lives of others, improve this world's morality, and expand mindsets for a better country and a better world (see Figure 4.3).[2]

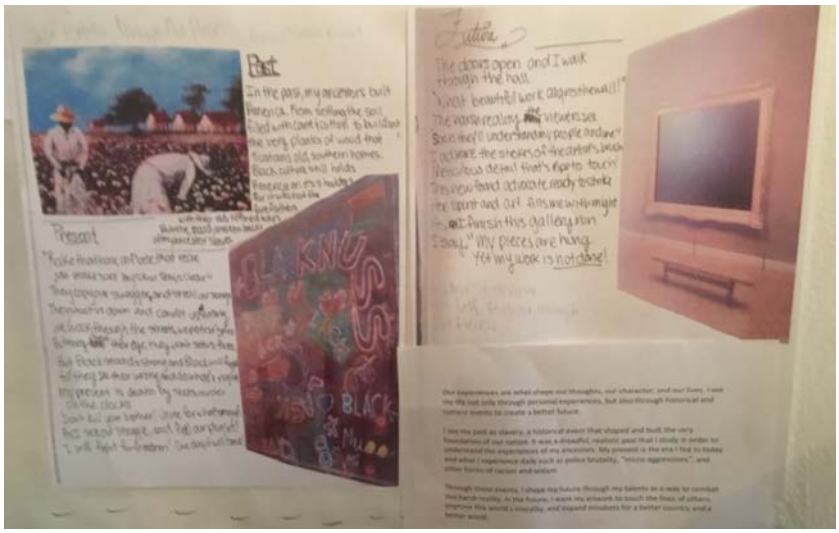

Figure 4.3. Jasmine's collage representation of her "past, present, and future."

I consider myself an artist because I make art to teach people about different things and hopefully connect with them. I want people to understand how I feel and hopefully broaden their perspective on the world. I began in preschool, making art. I was about three when I started drawing. I got an award in preschool for drawing Power Puff Girls and things like that. My elementary school wasn't really into the arts, but I did draw on my own time with different books and use YouTube and things like that to help learn how to draw, but I didn't really get to drawing until NOCCA because I never had any formal arts training. If I hadn't gone to NOCCA, my art interests would probably be

[2] Jasmine's artist statement

the same, but I don't feel like I would be as polished as I am now. It's almost as if just having a rough talent. I would have never had any training if I hadn't gone to the school and had art classes. I didn't even have basic art tools. I just had a normal pencil.

Drawing, painting, ceramics, photography. That's my best. I've done dance before, but I stopped doing it after going to dance school and pursuing visual arts. I also do Creative Writing. I have done a piece with writing—my own poem into a painting. I just started incorporating writing. My writing has always been about that, but it's just now combining them. At first it was just a painting of a woman and then it became… I used my poem, "I am an African American." The poem was in her hair, her natural hair. She's there as a woman. She's supposed to be a beautiful woman who's proud to be herself.

I'm very competitive despite being an artist. I never did sports, but I'm very competitive. Usually I do all these internships and competitions for my resume and also because I can meet new people, make new friends. My mom tries to find things like different programs and things like that. In 9th grade I did this internship at the CAC for the first time. In 10th grade, I was a camp counselor at the NOMA Arts Camp. In 11th grade, that's this summer, I did Brandan Odums' summer internship and then I'm working with him in his studio, Studio Be, later in the year. I did a competition, a national competition a few weeks ago at the NAACP Excellence Competition. This summer, I also went to Chicago at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and did a two-week early college program there. I went to the Chicago museum and did work there in figure drawing.

Mr. Brandan Odums of Studio Be is someone I look up to. He does video as well as his artwork. During my internship with him, at first, he was just talking to us about different issues. Every morning, we would talk about a different issue. We would watch the news, current events. He split us off into two groups depending on if you wanted to do a mural or do a video. We all went to Whitney Plantation and we all went there and looked at the different things, which I had been to. So, I enjoyed that. Then, we split into different groups. Some people would do a mural and the other group would do a video based on Algiers and the Algiers 7 and things such as that, based off Katrina.

I haven't lived long enough to see all of the different challenges in being an artist as a career. From a high schooler's perspective, it's just like, "See where it goes." I want to take it as a career, maybe doing commissions and things like that. I want to be a visual arts major at either Howard University or Xavier University.

NOCCA has an end of the year show every year. So, I display my art there. I displayed my art at the CAC for the Teen Arts Exhibition. Then, I displayed my "Social Injustice Series" at my church for a special exhibition. For the Social Injustice Series, we were doing a Black History program and they asked me to display my work. I agreed. This year, I started a series on social injustice based on the racism and social inequality in the United States (see Figure 4.4). All my work talks about that and how it relates to today and how it's not just in the past. I definitely love the work that Kara Walker does. When I was at NOCCA and beginning my "Social Injustice Series," one of my teachers recommended her to me. I said, "Okay." I'd never seen her work and I looked at her work and I like how she doesn't depict their faces because they weren't really people. At first, I just did things related to how I felt, but then I noticed how much stuff was going on as I started watching the news as I got older. I started picking things that were going on like police brutality. One of my pieces is about police brutality. Another artwork might relate to lynching and things like that.

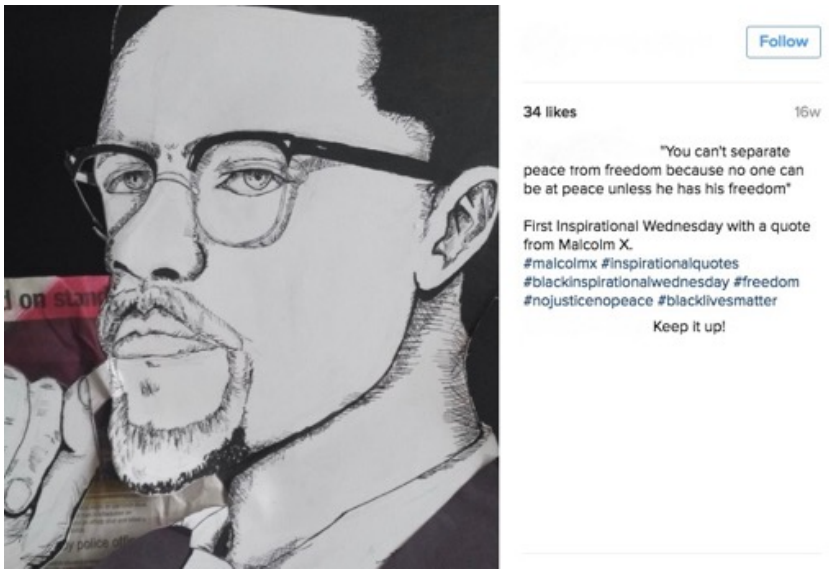

Figure 4.4. Jasmine's Malcolm X artwork from her *Social Injustice Series*.

All my work is activism in some form. I've done some work that addresses feminism, but mostly racism. Those are the main issues because I usually do things that I feel because that's what I relate to. Emotion is definitely a part of art. Art brings out emotion. It releases emotion. Even if it's abstract. It has some kind of emotion to it. Even if it's just to the artist. I don't mean it has this big, deep, sorrowful story, but if it means something to the artist or someone else. As long as it has some of kind depth or meaning to it. I used to make art because it was fun. I wasn't really a person that's like, "Oh, I'm going to make art because…" I never was that kind of person. I always made it because I enjoyed making it. I still enjoy it, but now it's more of a purpose because I feel like art without a purpose isn't art at all.

Rose

Rose is from a small town in Southwest Louisiana, about a three-hour drive from New Orleans. She came to stay with a relative in the New Orleans area for the duration of the internship, demonstrating impressive dedication to the opportunities afforded by this internship. Rose is tall, a White female with long brown hair with bangs who usually dresses casually in shorts and t-shirts. She has a sweet, yet strong personality. She seems to be thriving in the internship, fully embracing the opportunities to develop herself as an artist who utilizes the medium of photography and expand her artistic network beyond her hometown.

When I was six, my aunt gave me one of those children's Kodak pink cameras with the green strap. It was her daughter's, but she gave it to me. And, it used film. I carried that with me everywhere. It was an addiction. I carried that, no matter where we went, I took it. I think the only place I didn't take it was church. I took pictures of everything to the point where my mom had to tell me, "Rose, you have to stop. It's too much film that we're spending money on." I don't know what happened to it, but I remember finding it in my room when I was older, but I don't know what we did with it. I took pictures with my neighborhood friends who wanted to take pictures with me. I loved it. It was my favorite thing that I had. I remember making play dough with my

cousins. We would finger paint all the time and just little things that you don't think are art, really, now, but that were considered art when you were a kid, like coloring. I used to want to be a fashion designer because, of course, what girl didn't? I would bring my big box of crayons and colored pencils and my sketch pad with me everywhere we went in the car and I would color and draw little dresses and skirts and everything. When I grew out of fashion designing, I would still bring my colors and crayons everywhere in the car. I would just draw and color and create because I used to want to be an artist, too. In 1st grade, we had this thing where we had different stations for when we had free time. One of the stations was art and I really loved art even though I sucked at drawing. I picked it and I fell in love with it and from 1st grade to 5th grade, I drew all the time. It was my favorite thing.

I used to paint a lot. I think the thing was, I've always been interested in art, I just never had a thing that I could totally connect to and totally be like, "Hey, this is mine." When I finally got a camera and finally picked up photography, I was like, "Oh, this is the thing I've been looking for. This is what I can connect to. This is what I can learn. This is what I can edit and be mine." When I picked up photography, I was like, I don't really need to paint anymore. I'm not a visual artist at all. I can't draw. I can't really paint, not compared to doing media arts. It's not the same, the feeling I get. Paint, if I'm really stressed out and I can't get out and it's a really rainy day. It's very cathartic, even if it's painting totally random blotches because I do find it very cathartic. It'll relax me, but not for a serious, put it in a gallery thing.

I put a lot of emotion into all my photos. I get really big ideas and then I have to break them down into smaller ideas, but I still love them. I don't know how to describe it. I'm very much a dreamer, and so, I see things in a romantic way sometimes and I feel like when I have my camera, I see things in a different way than when I don't. I'll see a really old house when I don't have my camera as just a really old house. When I have my camera, I'll see it as this amazing shot in five different angles. It's just this weird thing about me. I love it. I don't know how to describe it. It's just this weird feeling I get that when I'm doing photography and when I'm taking photos, I can express these emotions that I don't know how to say into words, but then I can also express my opinions on different things on the world or on people or just judgment, not so much

judgment, just aggressive, I can't tell you this, but I can put it in my photos and I'm going to put it out into the world and you won't really know, but you'll know.

This black and white photo series, *Dark Within the Light*, was inspired by my past and present struggle with depression and anxiety. The central idea of this project is to bring awareness to mental illness. This project represents a portion of the pain and confusion that I and so many others have experienced while living with a mental illness. Art as activism photography is something I have recently discovered, and I have become extremely passionate about it. When working on this photo series, I took both personal and observational experiences to make the photos genuine.

I'm the first person in my family who's really involved in the arts. I haven't had anyone directly discourage me, but I've had that feeling of "it feels like people are discouraging me" because I've had questions. Like my grandmother, who I know will support me with anything, but it still feels like she isn't 100% on board because when I was talking about applying to the college I got into… It's an arts college… I found out Friday, but when I was talking about applying to it, or I was thinking about it, she was like, "Well, is it accredited?" I'm like, "Yes. It's a college." Usually her voice is very sweet, like a grandma's voice, but when we started talking about the college, her tone changed. She was like, "Is it accredited?" in a British accent. And, she started asking all these questions. She was very hesitant about it. But, no one has ever gone into the arts in our family. It's always been "practical." Well, I mean, art is practical, but to them, it's always been "practical"—air quotes. So, it's like, it's this brand-new idea for them and I think it's hard to swallow. One of my sisters is like, "Well, do you have a backup plan?" And, it just made me pause for a second. I was like, "I love you, but it feels like you're not supporting me." It makes me think I'm not going to make it as an artist. I know that's not what she's saying, but that's how it comes off. She's not artsy. She's not the artsy brain like I am. She's scientific and factual. Photography would be my major. It would be a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Yeah. Yeah. [breathlessly, dreamily]

I don't know if I consider myself an artist. I think I'm starting to. I used to not. I think I'm kind of starting to. I think the more projects I do, the more I think of myself that way. I think the older I get and the more experience I get, I think I will. I just, sometimes I'm hesitant to tell people I'm an artist because then they'll be like, "Oh, what

makes you an artist?" and give me that judgy look like, "What gives you the right to be an artist?" because then they'll be like, "Can I see your work? Can I judge your work?" because there are a lot of people who will do that. I don't know how to defend myself to that. So, it's like, I don't know, I think I am starting to be one, kind of. We'll see as I get older. I definitely want to be one. I would love to be an artist. I think that's always been what I've wanted to be. When I was younger, artist was one of my things that I wanted to be, but I also wanted to be 500 other things, but I would always go back to artist somewhere in there.

Lily

Lily lives in a small town across Lake Pontchartrain, about an hour away from the CAC, but she is staying with a family member in New Orleans for the internship. She is a White female and her primary artistic focus is in the visual arts. On the day of our interview, Lily was wearing a grey hooded jacket, a black and white striped t-shirt dress, white slide sandals, and a pink scrunchie to pull her medium-length dyed-blond hair into a ponytail. Although many of her teachers, peers, and family members recognized her as artistic, Lily was hesitant to fully claim an artist identity—calling art a hobby at one point. However, over the course of our interview, there were several times when Lily seemed surprised at the depth of her artistic background—coming to realize that she came from a family with several people who created art and who supported her interest in developing her artistic interests and skills.

> Growing up, I was always known as the artsy one. So, if my teachers wanted to make banners and they needed some help, they would always ask me, and I really liked that. My mom and dad have both really supported my interest in art. My dad still has one of my middle school art class pictures displayed. Also, in 1st or 2nd grade, I took a summer camp and they did an art class that was really interesting. I remember, we specifically studied Picasso. So, we picked a Picasso painting to recreate and I still have that. We got to work with clay and we made our faces out of clay and got to paint it. I

definitely think it was that summer camp just because that was my first time I did real art. We worked on canvases and we worked with different media and it was just something I really enjoyed. Whenever you finish a piece and you can just really be proud of it, it's like, "I enjoyed making this and I think it looks good." I think that's when I really got my first idea that I was an artist and that was what I really liked.

Like I said, when I was younger, I was recognized as the creative or the artsy one. So, that was something that made me myself, and I just carried that on. And now, I make art to fill up free time on my own outside of class because I just like to feel productive, to feel like I've done something. Working on the kite installation at the CAC, it's a very meditative, relaxing thing for me to do. The thing I love about art is it's very relaxing to me. I could just sit there and paint or draw at the end of the day and kind of wind down.

My dad is a very creative man and he's not an artist and that's not what he does for his career, but he's always doing art. Not big scale projects, but just always, a very artsy man and I think that had a lot of impact on my life. My mom also, she's a very artsy woman. I guess they were the ones who enrolled me in the art program. So, they've definitely been a big impact on that. Growing up, my dad always did take interest in what I did. So, on top of being known as the creative one in the classroom, that was really something I identified as at home as well because he would always be interested in what I was making and be very encouraging and he hung up a bunch of my works on the wall and he still has them hung up and it's just a reminder. He's just always taken an interest into what I'm doing art-wise. So, that's been really encouraging to keep making art. In the past few years, since I've been in art and doing it on my own, my older sister has gotten into it. So, our whole family, I think we would all identify as artists.

Also, anytime a birthday or holiday comes around, when my family is asking, "Oh, what do you want?" they're like, "Oh, do you want more art supplies?" They always know to get me paint or canvases or brushes. I guess that's kind of encouraging because it can be really confusing, who you see yourself as. So, to be able to choose, "Oh, I'm an artist" kind of gives you something to identify as.

Artist is something I can identify as. So, my friends can kind of identify me as an artist. They know I like to paint. So, I'm kind of like the artsy one. Most people at my

school are just like, “Oh, I have to take this one art class and get it out the way” and will just take one year of art just to get it out the way. So, it’s not something they focus on. But, I’ve been pretty lucky, I’m in the art group. I’ve just been fortunate to have artistic friends. I think as my friends go, they’re all kind of faced with the same division of, “Oh, do I pursue art, or do I pursue more of an academic route?” as far as college goes. Because art has such a big influence on you and you don’t necessarily want to give it up, but it’s not necessarily something that’s going to be the most supportive later in life, I guess. I think that’s just the general attitude. I excel in academics. So, art wasn’t really an option. I feel like, especially in Mandeville, art wasn’t pushed as much. I don’t know how it is in other schools, but I feel like we have a pretty good art program, but I don’t know if it’s really seen as a realistic career to pursue in the arts.

My biggest discourager is probably myself. Art is definitely a big interest of mine, but it’s also more of a hobby. I know that I excel in academics and I take advanced classes and I have a really high GPA. So, it would almost feel like wasted potential if I went into art, but it’s not something that I want to give up. So, as far as college studies go and pursuing that as a career, it’s probably not going to be a realistic choice for me, but like I said, I don’t want to give it up and I want to keep it as a hobby and maybe get more involved in extracurricular art programs.

I have no clue what I want to do after I graduate from high school. I have some ideas. I kind of want to go into civil engineering or environmental engineering. I’m really interested in going to medical school here in New Orleans, the LSU Medical School. But, I don’t know where I want to go to school. Anytime college talk comes up, I get really intimidated and I just don’t want to talk about it, but that really forced me to think about it and made me think about new things like what environment of college I want, like a big school or small school. What do I want to study? So, if I’m looking into something, into a school, like if I decide to go into civil engineering, if they have that major. But, also, if I do want to study art or take a few courses, if they even offer that. That could be something I would look for to take a few art courses. I haven’t really thought that far ahead, but I mean I definitely think I’ll continue to spend my free time painting. That’s usually what I try to do. Life gets really busy sometimes, but it’s nice to just sit down and paint.

Alex

Alex is White with short curly brown hair and braces. Alex has a passion for the visual arts. He identifies as a transgender male. Alex attends a highly-selective charter school where he is involved in a specialized visual arts program. Alex has a sensitive, expressive, and playful personality and on one day wore a green dragon costume with red lace-up boots to the internship. On the day of our interview, Alex was wearing a grey hoodie sweatshirt, black knee length shorts, and brown lace up boots.

> As a kid, I spent a lot of time dreaming. I spent my days exploring my backyard, searching for faeries, and dancing around mushroom circles. The piece I chose to represent my past self illustrates this child that I was in a very figurative way. Philosopher's Coat is a trench coat fabricated from copper wire and turquoise beads. It is a piece I could see myself wearing while making little leaf homes for snails and lizards. For me, this coat represents the freedom and transparency of my childhood (see Figure 4.5).[3]

Figure 4.5. Alex's visual representation of past, present, and future self.

[3] Alex's artist statement reflecting his visual representation of past, present, and future self.

I'm a visual artist. I've done visual art since I was a kid. My first memory, my first tactile and visual memory is: I was finger painting with these old paints on my kitchen floor. I grew up in an arts family. My mom actually taught my art class for a year. My mom went to college for graphic design. She specializes in textiles. She likes doing pottery. She had a carpentry business with my dad who is also an artist. She was a painter. My dad was a fine arts carpenter. He also did some pottery, too, and made sculptures. I've been pretty involved with art for life. Ever since I can remember, it's just something I've done.

When I was a kid, I was really big into singing and acting. I write songs still and I like to sing, but it's not something I'm highly comfortable with just because I've been slightly discouraged from it. I played the cello from 8 years old to 11 or 12. I went to the NOCCA [New Orleans Center for Creative Arts] Arts Conservatory for cello, the after-school program, when I was in elementary school. I guess it put a lot of stress on me because I was expected to practice all the time even though it wasn't my passion.

I think it's a bit different with visual arts. Because I'm so passionate about it, I'm willing to do the work in order to build my skills. It's a very open form of expression. There's no really rules that say: "you can't paint this" or "you can't paint like this," "you can't do this," "you can't do that." It's very "do what you want" and if you think it's art and people look at it as art, then it is. I like that a lot about visual arts. A little side note: I did ballet for a year or two when I was really little. I hated it so much. I'm not a dancer. I do not like dancing. So, there's that, but also just the rules of everything. It was not my thing. As a little kid who has ADHD and can't concentrate and a rebel, admittedly, it was not my thing. I like the form of expression where you can just be yourself and it's accepted at that form of expression.

Most of the time, I'm not really trying to make art to get a message across to other people, especially right now since I'm a teenager and very self-centered because that's how teenagers are. I make art to help myself deal with things. I associate colors with feelings. So, I'll pick up a bunch of colors and start painting. It helps me make something that helps me feel better than I was before. I guess it's a very freeing process. At the same time, it's kind of like your mind goes blank because you're not really thinking about what you're trying to make. You're just trying to feel better. I also feel

like if you're drawing a face or something, it's a very peaceful thing because you just block everything else out and concentrate on what you're trying to make.

I started a mural on my wall in my room. It's a self-portrait (see Figure 4.6). In the middle, it's a portrait of kind of my face, but it's kind of abstracted. Every time I feel a particularly strong emotion, I pick colors that represent that emotion and paint patterns that I feel like represent that particular moment. It's never a finished piece for me. I sent the picture to my friend and she's a writer. She wrote me this paragraph: "It looks like a representation of someone coming undone…. The scratch marks look like … this person trying desperately to hold on to how they were in the beginning…. I'm also seeing a slight theme of the two selves." As I was making the piece that's exactly the feelings I was feeling, seeing that she got that from just a picture I sent her of my work that was very abstract, that she got that from that was very powerful to me. I think that's the most understanding somebody has been about my abstract art ever, which was a really awesome experience.

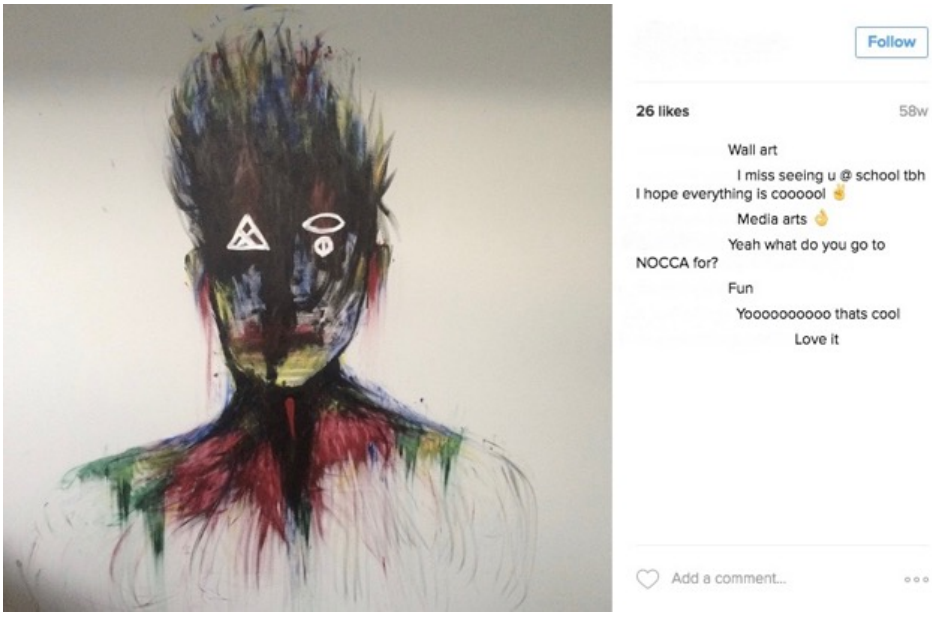

Figure 4.6. Alex's wall mural in an Instagram post.

I am very socially-aware already, but I feel like at the moment, I'm more self-aware than I am socially-aware. As I get older, I will become more socially-aware and I think my art is going to evolve with that just because what I'm paying attention to more will be what my art is about. It will probably develop into very activist art at some point because it's probably what I'm going to be paying attention to, what I'm worried about. I

have one piece. It's a self-portrait and it's a portrait of myself. I am a transgender male. So, my sex is female, but I identify as a male. It was a portrait of how it feels to not feel right. I've had people tell me that they related to it (see Figure 4.7).

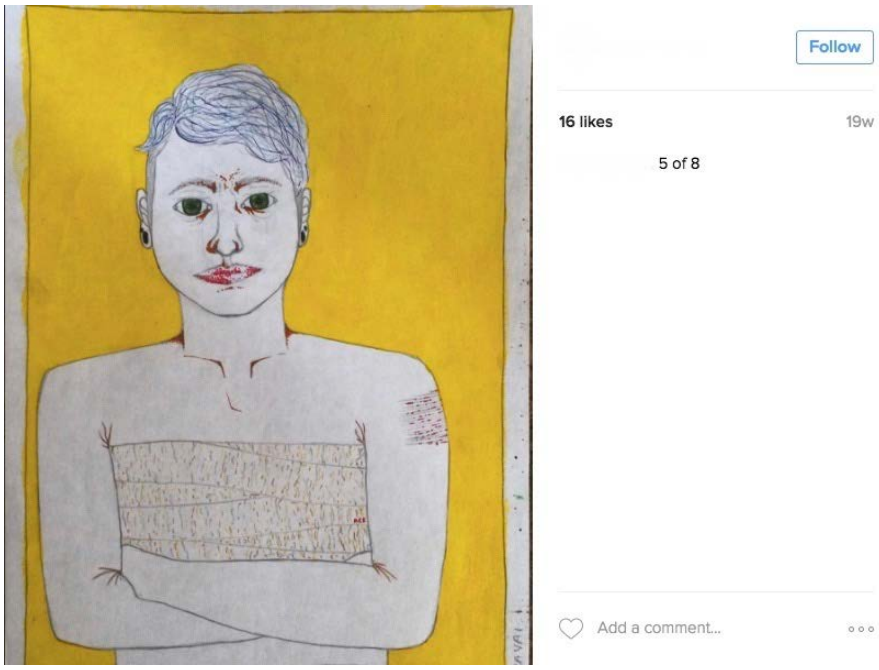

Figure 4.7. Alex's self-portrait in an Instagram post.

There's a lot of messages in it that people can relate to. Even though it was for me to realize that I needed to change my perspective on myself to make myself feel better, but it was also so people can look at it and feel like they're not alone and that there's other people that feel that way. It was a piece addressing my dysphoria. I also went through a period where I was self-harming a lot. So, it's also addressing that. It's addressing the self-harm, the dysphoria, the feeling like I can't be me and I feel like I'm actually a lot closer to being myself than I was. This is another piece (see Figure 4.8). This is a portrait of myself. I took pictures of myself and obviously I have boobs, but I took them off in the drawing. Unless you didn't know me, you wouldn't know that. For me, personally, it was one of those things where it helped to make myself different and have control over that.

Art: It's my passion. I don't know how to say anything other than that. It's what I do. It's not really a choice for me. It's, "Do I want to keep living and stay happy? I'm going to have to do this.'" It's a form of expression and people need to express themselves. It's one of the best ways I can express myself and having people understand

you is one of the fundamental ways of building relationships. Having people understand me or even try to understand me by looking at my art is a good way to form relationships.

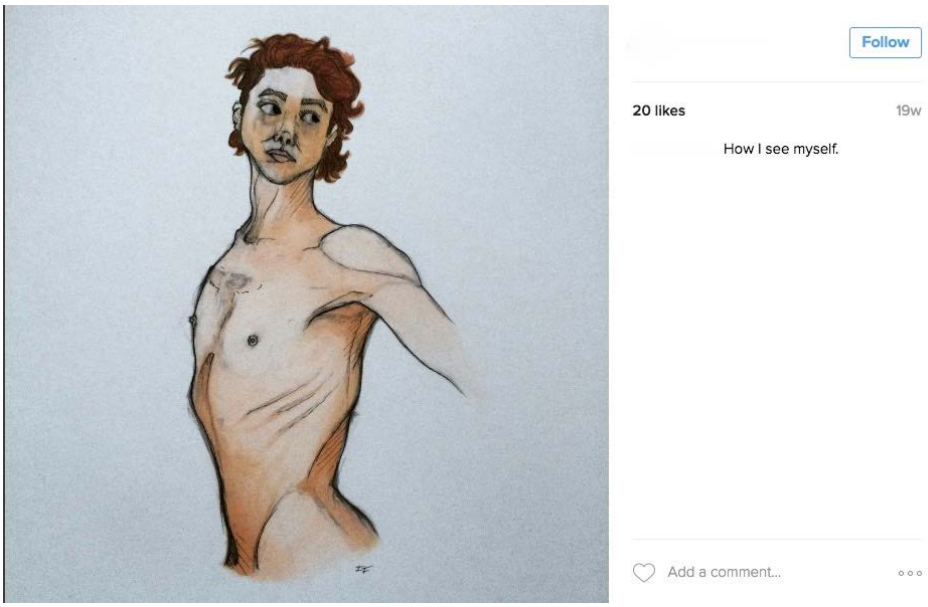

Figure 4.8. Alex's self-portrait: "How I see myself" in an Instagram post.

I consider myself an artist. It's weird to be like, "I'm an artist." It goes back to the idea that you are your biggest critic. It's like, "Am I an artist?" I guess it all depends on whether somebody else would see my art as actual art. Yes, I'm an artist. I don't think my artistic practice is ever going to go away. I'm really not sure yet about my future career. I want to do a double major with some of kind of engineering and visual arts. I know what I'm passionate about, but I have no idea about the title. I'm going to have to figure it out. For now, I'm just doing my thing. I would like to have a career as an artist. I think it's nice to prove to people who don't think it's a career that it can be. I'm all about proving people wrong. Just existing I've proved so many people wrong.

Additional Participants and Excluded Perspectives

There were some additional participants in the internship that I was not able to interview, but whose stories are integral to the research. In this section, I offer brief descriptions of these other participants, highlighting their positionality in terms of race, class, gender, and other salient aspects of their visible identities. In addition, in some cases, I include self-representations that

the interns created during a drawing elicitation activity that I led during the research process. Here, I describe some of the other interns whom I did not get to know as well, but who were active participants in the internship.

Lauren is a Black female, who attends a highly-selective charter school in the Lakeview neighborhood of New Orleans—the same school that I attended for high school. Lauren is interested in both music and visual arts, with a particular interest in photography. On one typical day during the internship, Lauren, who is rather tall, was wearing a long-sleeve flannel shirt over a Red Hot Chili Peppers t-shirt, white high-top Converse sneakers, and blue jeans with her black hair in twists pulled up into a ponytail. Natalie is a White female with long brown hair who is homeschooled and lives on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Natalie has an artistic focus in theatre and film and her art reflects her advocacy against rape culture. Nora has long wavy brown hair and attends a highly-selective charter school in Uptown New Orleans and has recently become involved in the visual arts. On a typical day, Natalie wore jeans, a t-shirt, and peach-colored Keds sneakers. Nora's mother is from Nicaragua and her father is from the United States and she identifies as Latina. During one of my observations, Nora was wearing a grey sweater, black pants, and white flip flops with brown soles and silver buckles. Alyssa is a White female with long, dark brown hair who attends an all-girls Catholic school in the Lakeview neighborhood of New Orleans. Alyssa identifies as a visual artist. Clara is a White female who wears glasses and her brown hair in a bob style who attends an all-girls Catholic school in Uptown New Orleans. Clara identifies as a filmmaker. During one of my observations, Clara wore a pair of white splatter-painted overalls, a long-sleeved white t-shirt, and white Adidas sneakers with flower-patterned stripes. Olivia is a White female with medium length dark brown hair who attends an all-girls Catholic school in Uptown New Orleans for part

of the school day and a highly-selective public arts high school for part of the school day. Olivia identifies as a fashion designer and often wore dramatic makeup, high-heeled boots, lacy or satiny black shirts and short black skirts. Zoe is a White female with long straight light brown hair who identifies as bisexual. On her first day with the internship, she wore heavy eyeliner, a red and yellow Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) t-shirt, and a black cardigan. She lives in a small town about an hour outside of New Orleans. She identifies as a visual artist and runs a blog for teens about reading. Erica is a Black female who attends an all-girls non-denominational private school in the Garden District of New Orleans. Erica was only in attendance during the first day of the internship.

Jordan is a Black male who attended the internship sporadically and yet his narrative, in its absence, is one of the most important ones of the entire study. In enacting the analytical aspects of portraiture methodology, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) encourage researchers to "be vigilant in attending to the experiences and perspectives that do not fit the convergent patterns" (p. 192). Jordan's experience in the teen arts internship is an example of such divergence. At one point, I heard Jordan talking to the CAC Education Coordinator, Stella, about having difficulty finding a place to park his bike so that he could attend the internship. This exchange revealed something about why it was so difficult for him to get to the program regularly. Although I was not able to gather much data on Jordan to help me construct his portrait, he completed two drawings and participated in the program occasionally (see Figure 4.9). Because of this, his story is key, in part, because I was not able to gather much information on his story. His story is silenced. I can only piece it together from the incomplete knowledge and assumptions available to me. Jordan's portrait is incomplete because he stopped attending the internship program after only a few sessions. And yet, these attempts at participation

indicated that he wanted to be present but was unable to be due to various barriers and obstacles. In addition to the example of Jordan who only attended sporadically, this study was unable to attend to the excluded perspectives of the other young artists in New Orleans who were not included in this internship. Considering Kraehe's (2017) arts equity framework is relevant here—because of inequitable distribution of resources like transportation, or time, or money, it is even difficult to enter out-of-school art programming in museums and community arts centers.

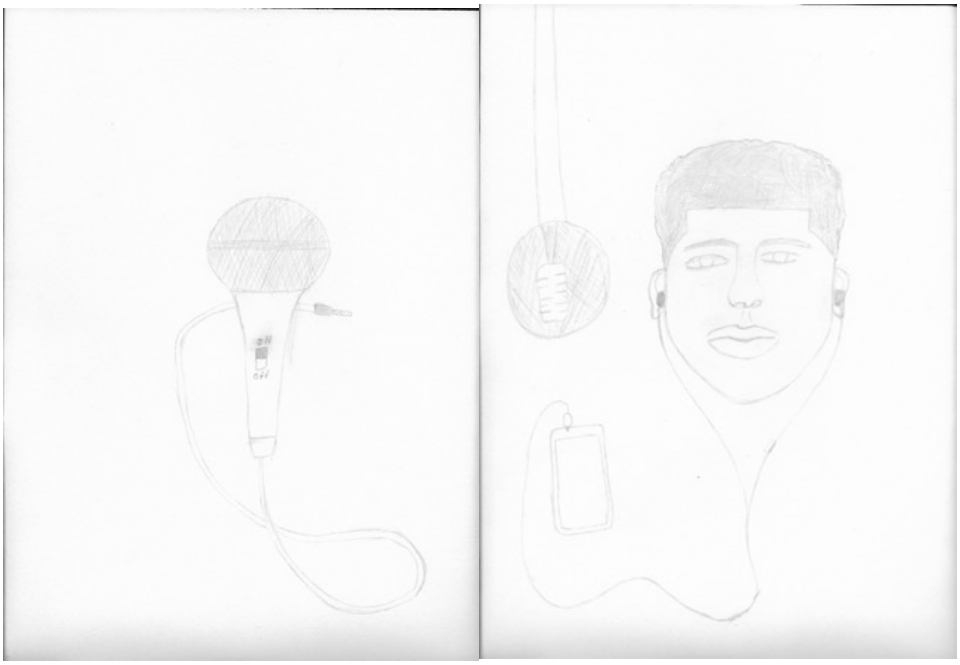

Figure 4.9. Jordan's self-representation drawings.

Conclusions

After completion of the portraits, I sent them to each of the interns represented. None objected to their portrayal, and some had very positive responses. James responded: "I love it, no changes here. What you're doing is so powerful and inspirational." And yet, these narratives represent a particular moment in time. If I interviewed and observed these young people again, their stories will likely have changed. Indeed, when I conducted member checks of the portraits

with participants, some of them asked to make slight revisions to their portraits. For example, in response to his portrait, Alex wrote:

> I read through it and I really like it! It definitely paints an accurate portrait of me. The only part I would omit is the sentence that mentions "my girlfriend." We are not together anymore, and I don't think that sentence really adds to my story. Thank you so much for writing about me and sharing the outcome with me, I'm really honored.

Upon following up with Rose, the intern who discussed her family's disapproval of her plans to attend an art school, a year after our initial interview, she said that she would be attending a different school and majoring in film rather than art. In addition, upon following up with Cecilia a year after our initial interview, she said:

> Thank you for showing me this. Reading it really opened my eyes and showed me just how much I've grown since, and I'm pretty surprised with myself that I actually said a lot of this. Most of it is fine, but I've added some more to the whole LGBTQ section, so it is more true to what I am today, without being too specific so it still does capture my mindset a year ago.

She had developed an increasingly nuanced description of her sexual orientation and asked to revise her narrative to read: "I can see myself on some spectrum of the LGBTQ+ community although labels overwhelm me." Bresler (2006) notes that narratives are "occasions" that are "ephemeral" (p. 36). I merely am making a portrait of a moment in time, a key yet fleeting time in the course of a life as an artist. Like poetry, the portrait does reveal glimmers of "verisimilitude" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 176).

CHAPTER 5

CONTEXTUAL FIGURED WORLDS

Both portraiture methodology and social practice theory place significant emphasis on context, acknowledging that people are simultaneously shaped by contexts, but that contexts are also constituted by the people entangled in them. Drawing upon field notes, interviews, and visual documentation, in this chapter, I explore how contextual figured worlds influence artist identity work. Identity work happens within several intersecting contextual figured worlds. People exist within multiple figured worlds simultaneously, and figured worlds are not simply contextual background information, but inextricably linked to the processes of identity formation. They are physical and imagined spaces where identities are constituted and continuously revised. Each of these figured worlds are conceptualized through discourses about their existence. They are what Holland et al. (1998) call "as if" worlds, worlds that act as spaces of authoring past, present, and future selves.

Inspired by Pérez and Cannella's (2013) use of Clarke's (2005) situational mapping to describe the post-Katrina New Orleans educational landscape, I found situational mapping helpful in identifying the contextual figured worlds of artist identity formation within this study. Like Holland et al. (1998), Clarke also uses the terminology of "worlds" in describing particular situations and phenomena. Situational mapping allowed me to visualize the connections between the worlds so that I was better able to translate this mapped analysis of non-linear entities into the linear structure of the scholarly text. Mapping was also useful for categorizing some of the distinct contextual figured worlds of artist identity work. Through mapping, I was able to identify them on macro levels, and also break them down to micro levels specific to the study.

The interns were influenced by various contextual figured worlds, whether or not they acknowledged such. Indeed, many of the interns downplayed the impact that Hurricane Katrina had on their lives. For example, Joey said, "It affected a lot of people a lot more than it did me." Yet they were, like anyone in New Orleans, a part of this figured world and as Lucy said, "it's still really painful to think about and remember, even as someone who wasn't deeply affected by it." Also, many of the interns wanted to distance themselves from the figured world of New Orleans, even as they admitted its influence on them. For instance, Tristan said: "Looking into the culture and stuff down here in New Orleans, I get influenced, but…. I want to move to a bigger city, so I can have more opportunities and meet more people."

In addition, the processes of artist identity formation were situated within sociocultural contexts where positionings around race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, (dis)ability, etc. are ever-present. In this section, I present depictions of some of the intersecting contextual figured worlds and how they informed the identity work of the young artists in the study. Although I narrate this section and offer my perspectives, I aim to highlight how the interns conceptualized some of the figured worlds that have shaped them.

The CAC Teen Arts Internship

On my first day of data collection, I arrived early to the CAC and had some time to sit at a small table near the entry to the center and observe the building itself. As I sat at this table and looked out, I noted that the front entrance to the CAC consists of walls of windows so that one can easily see in or out. This wall of windows creates a feel of transparency and openness. As I looked out, I could see tourists passing by. I presumed that they are tourists because most of them were White, they carried fanny packs or backpacks, and they were wearing shorts, t-shirts,

tennis shoes, and hats. The CAC is located in downtown New Orleans on Camp St., in what is now considered the Arts District, and which was once the Warehouse District (see Figure 5.1). The CAC is directly across from the Ogden Museum of Southern Art and the Confederate Memorial Hall Museum. Next door, is The National World War II Museum. The neighborhood is also home to many art galleries. Ozanam Inn, a homeless shelter, is located down the street.

Figure 5.1. Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans.

As I looked up at the interior CAC structures, I noticed wood beams that extended all the way to the ceiling and walls that extended up several stories high (see Figure 5.2). The wood beams are supported by white columns. The floors are of dark grey concrete and the walls are partly exposed brick and partly white plaster. There is a wide circular white ramp in the center of the building, a winding ramp that I recall loving as a child because it is fun to traverse. Above

the white ramp is a modern-looking jagged red metal sculpture. Next to me, was a floor-to-ceiling artwork with blue, dark brown, and tan patterns at the top and dark brown metal mesh at the bottom. There are sky lights above that let in natural light. The entire space has a very industrial feel, an homage to the building's historical past as a warehouse, while also being light and airy. There are lots of big, empty spaces here. There are old, curved windows with bricks on one wall, windows on the front, white walls elsewhere.

Figure 5.2. Contemporary Arts Center interior entryway.

Suddenly, I heard zydeco music playing in the background. I realized that this must be a music or dance lesson as part of the summer camp. I heard loud clanging. Then, I heard softer clanging, like someone playing the triangle. I heard the class counting to the beat: "1, 2, 3, 4."

There was a summer camp going on with programming in visual arts, culinary arts, dance, music, and theater. The interns were to be a part of this every afternoon.

I looked out the window. I saw a Black man skateboarding down the street. I saw a White man and White girl of about five walking hand in hand down the street. A White woman went into the CAC coffee shop, got coffee, drank it at a table, then left. I saw a Black boy of about twelve walking across the street. He was wearing a yellow and white polo shirt and khaki pants and he was holding some keys. Another family of tourists passed by. The zydeco music and the clanging began again.

To enter the space of the teen arts internship, I took the elevator upstairs to the third floor of the CAC. I found a room that was labeled "Teen Arts Interns" with a handwritten poster and I went into the room. This area was very spare, unfinished-looking, as if it were created simply temporarily for this program and would be soon removed to make way for new purposes. It seemed that the CAC was in-between exhibitions and the camp had taken over the entire building. As soon as camp ended, White Linen Night would be held, one of the biggest art events in New Orleans and the CAC plays a big role in this. So, the exhibitions that were being set up now, were in anticipation of openings on White Linen Night. I saw someone with platinum blond hair, a White female who appears to be in her mid to late twenties leading a discussion. I realized that this must be Stella, the Education Coordinator who runs the arts internship program.

In the room where the interns met each day, there were four rectangular white folding tables placed to form a box in the middle of the room (see Figure 5.3). Around the tables, we sat on a variety of mismatched Black folding chairs. There were wood planks on the floor and white walls. There were visible wood beams, wood columns, exposed pipers, and track lighting.

Figure 5.3. CAC Teen Arts Internship classroom.

There was a spare, industrial feel to this room. It seemed to have been temporarily constructed expressly for this internship and was likely torn down and transformed into something else at the end of the summer. On the walls were posters that Stella was using for instruction and for running the internship. One poster listed a set of "Norms" or expectations for the internship program. Another group of posters listed a set of personality traits designated "North," "South," "East," and "West" and a list of interns who identified with each of these traits. There was a poster with a list of prompts that Stella added to with each new journal entry. There was also a poster listing the summer camp discipline assignments of the week with two or three interns assigned to the disciplines of visual arts, culinary arts, dance, music, or theater. As the internship progressed, the walls became adorned with many artifacts that represented the processes of identity work happening in the program (see Figure 5.4). These artifacts included artwork and instructional materials that the interns created.

Figure 5.4. CAC classroom wall display.

The fact that the interns made efforts to become involved in this CAC Teen Arts Internship is an example of identity work. The internship itself functions as a figured world and entering the program signified an interest in developing oneself as an artist by being in an art space, interacting with other artists, and doing the things that artists do. Some of the interns had done this internship in previous years and several interns were involved in other teen arts programming at the CAC like the Teen Arts Leadership Council and the Teen Zine program. At the start of each of my interviews with the participants, I asked them how they got involved with the CAC. Many of them learned about the internship through their school art teachers, family members, or friends. A few of the interns traveled from other parts of the state of Louisiana to participate in the program. A few interns lived on the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain and one intern lived in a town outside of Lafayette, three hours from New Orleans. Indeed, it seemed that some of the interns exerted significant effort in order to participate in the program with some

staying with relatives who lived in the New Orleans area through the duration of the program. However, there are limitations on access to the program due to proximity and mobility. Most of the interns were driven to the internship by a parent and dropped off at the CAC. One intern, Jordan, rode his bike to the CAC, but often encountered some difficulties with this and eventually stopped attending the program. Jordan's thwarted attempts at maintaining participation in the internship signified the limitations on access to the figured world of the arts internship.

Belonging, Exclusion, and the Artworld

At various points, the interns addressed the dual themes of belonging and exclusion in relation to the artworld. In describing the constructed nature of how things become viewed as art and how people become viewed as artists, Danto (1964) states that "to see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry-an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld" (p. 580). Becker (1982) further defines the artworld as "the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for" (x). In this study, I am considering the artworld to be a figured world. Like the artworld, the nature of a figured world is that it is a bounded system—albeit a flexible and ever-changing one. Whether one belongs or not is ever-changing, too. And, whether one wants to participate or not is also up for debate. Artistic environments such as specialized arts schools or other programming such as this internship were often described by the young artists as "safe spaces," "accepting," places where you can "be yourself," terminology often used to excuse such spaces from being considered non-

inclusive, but this sense of "belonging" in the arts is really mostly applicable to people who already hold some sort of privileged positionality (Gaztambide-Fernández & Parekh, 2017).

Just as I developed my own impressions of the space of the CAC and how it fit into the intersecting figured worlds at work in this research into identity work in young people aligned with the arts, my research participants had their own perspectives on the CAC. I asked some of the interns about their impressions of the space of the CAC. As some interns had more familiarity with the CAC, they more easily adapted to the location and felt a sense of "belonging" in the space. Lucy said the following about being in the CAC:

> I personally get lost super-easily. So, when I started here, it was a really intimidating building because everyone here is very artsy and there's always some artsy thing going on in all the galleries. I was just very intimidated by everyone here and the whole building itself because I was so prone to getting lost, but as I've done stuff here more, I've learned my way around and I feel more familiar with it, but the building itself, once you come in, you can tell it's an artist space, going on any floor, seeing galleries in progress, exhibitions in progress or coming up here and going into the conference room and seeing a bunch of teenagers working on the zine cutting and pasting pages. It's definitely a very artsy place. I think it has a really good atmosphere and a very creative atmosphere that's really nurturing if you're trying to make art.

Of being in the space of the CAC, James said that when he first came to the CAC, he was "shy," but that with time, he said:

> I really feel almost at home here. I absolutely love that everything does look like super factory or industrial. It's almost unfinished. You can see some pipes somewhere. It's always ready to change and evolve with the art that comes in here and it's always ready to knock down a wall and put up a gallery, put in new walls. These walls weren't even here last year. It is amazing. I just love that mentality that the building that houses the art is almost art itself.

Both Lucy and James had spent a significant amount of time at the CAC because of their involvement in multiple teen arts programs. Thus, they were able to provide vivid descriptions that captured both the physical space as well as the experience of being in the space and how being in the space has influenced them in their goals of becoming artists. Lucy stated: "The

CAC itself is a lot less intimidating than going to a gallery and seeing professionally hung up paintings by very famous people. It's this very accessible world of art, especially to a young person." Both James and Lucy described becoming increasingly comfortable in the space of the CAC the more time they have spent here with Lucy calling it a "nurturing" environment and James saying that he felt "at home" in the space because they felt as if they could "be themselves."

The figurative space of the CAC and the teen arts internship is as relevant as the physical space in contributing to the young artists' senses of themselves. Many of the interns expressed that they felt as if the teen arts internship was a "safe space." For example, when I asked Alex about what he liked about this internship program, he said:

> It's a very safe space. I feel like everyone can talk to each other and not feel like they're going to be judged by anyone. I feel like that's a very cool thing about it because we all have very similar mindsets because we're all artists.

When asked to provide further examples of this inclusive climate, Alex said:

> We all have similar experiences that we can talk about, experiences that we've had dealing with depression or eating disorders or anxiety involved with all of that and we have a similarity in the fact that we use art to help us. I think the fact that we can talk about that very openly and have nobody try to judge us for what we've been through and have people relate to that. It's very special.

During the poetry workshop, the interns had a discussion about the arts internship program with the spoken word poet Kataalyst Alcindor. Alex noted, "I have a hard time connecting to people." However, Alex also said, "Here, I feel like I can connect with people in ways that I have not before." Rose then replied, "Here, you have people who have been through different things and you can connect to that in some way." Tristan revealed, "At times, I am very shy, but it's making me more extroverted. Hearing everyone's story made me more comfortable." Cecilia said, "My mom forced me to apply." She said that she did not want to be

a camp counselor, but that "It felt like a safe spot." About her parents, she said, "They say, 'All Lives Matter' and really stupid stuff. Coming here is an escape from all that." Kataalyst then led the group in taking a collective "deep breath." Kataalyst said, "As artists, you guys create this utopia for other people, a safe haven." He said, "You said you feel safe here. You guys created this" and noted that "There's someone else looking for this safe space." Cecilia said, "I've always wanted to do something like this. I write a lot." James said, "To be completely honest, when I found out we were doing this, I was dead set on not sharing." Kataalyst said, "I'm really happy you shared. You had some meaningful things to say." However, some interns did not feel the same way about the program and expressed difficulty in connecting with others in the program.

I noticed that Stella made an effort to ensure that all interns were getting opportunities to voice their views during discussions rather than just those who regularly volunteered to speak and those who spoke most loudly. Stella often reminded students to "Step Up, Step Back" to give those who talk less often the space to talk, too. Although Tristan understood the importance of the social aspects of artmaking and artistic identity development, he did not feel as if the arts internship program was helping him share in the experiences of other artists and connect with other artists. Tristan thus described his discomfort in the space:

> In this internship, everyone is extra quiet and it's hard to talk to everyone. I find myself leaving this room to go downstairs to the camp and talk to the people that I already know camp counselors because it's so hard for the other interns to open up and it's so hard for me to open up as well. It's so awkward in here. It's so awkward. I remember one time I was like, "Okay, I'll come upstairs and eat lunch with them for once."
>
> I was sitting there trying to talk and every time, someone would speak over me and they would change the subject before I would get my words out. I was just like, "You know what, I'm just going to leave." That's how it was. Even though we're all open and we all share the same opinions, it's not the same because I don't know them as well as I know other people. Even though we share similar views, we don't share the same common interests. I need to be able to share common interests and talk about things that I always

> talk about. I can't talk about political issues and activism all the time. I need to be goofy. I'm a goofy kid, really silly and stuff like that. I can't be all "intelligent" all the time. I need to have fun and have weird humor and stuff like that.

This was in contrast to the way many of the other interns felt about the program. It is significant that Tristan not only felt "awkward" in this supposedly "safe space," but that he also felt compelled to leave the physical space of the internship classroom (and the figured world of the internship) in order feel more comfortable and to connect with others with whom he shared "common interests." When I asked Tristan if there was anyone in the group that he felt that he connected with, he said: "Lauren. That's the only person that I've really been able to talk to because she hasn't had anyone to talk to either." I replied that "I noticed when she read her poem today, she used the word 'isolated.' That made me curious." Tristan then said, "Even though we do connect, she does isolate herself a little bit." I tried to probe Tristan as to why he and Lauren might have felt isolated, but he did not offer any explanation for this. In my view, I think there was likely a racialized component to these feelings of isolation because Lauren and Tristan were among the very few Black participants in the internship, but I did not press him to state that. These feelings of awkwardness and isolation are reminiscent of the phenomenological concept of disorientation—both within oneself and in relation to others. As Ahmed (2008) writes, "an effect of being 'out of place' is also to create disorientation in others: the body of color might disturb the picture—and do so simply as a result of being in spaces that are lived as white" (p. 160). Hence, it is necessary to "consider racism an ongoing and unfinished history, which orients bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space" (Ahmed, 2008, p. 111)—particularly in spaces that have been historically designated as "White spaces" such as museums and similar arts institutions.

Tristan described how some social justice progress has been happening, but that in some areas, there has been regression. When I asked him to provide some examples of that, he said:

> Say, homophobia: in the past, people were afraid to come out and share their sexuality. People kept that in forever and with everything going on now, with legalization of same-sex marriage and things like that. That's a huge step from way back when. That's good for that specific category, but a lot of things are also, a lot of things are regressing, with the spike in Black killings, that's like going back to the 1960s and then that happened again in the 1980s and 1990s and then today. It's crazy how history will repeat itself so many times.

While I would not necessary assert that the interns as a broadly characterized group were oblivious to racial injustice, when they used the term "safe space," they most often seemed to be referring to safety for LGBTQ+ individuals. The arts are often characterized as a "safe space" for LGBTQ+ individuals and many of the students considered themselves members of the LGBTQ+ community and activists for LGBTQ+ rights. For example, Joey, who identifies as a bisexual White male of a high socioeconomic status, describes an example from his experiences as part of the theatre program at his all-boys Catholic high school of this sense of belonging that artistic figured worlds can foster for LGBTQ+ identified individuals:

> The theatre program, especially. Almost all of the guys in there, that is their family. I luckily have another group of friends that I can reside in, but our theatre troupe is its own thing. Once you go in, you are part of that, that's who you go to dinner with. Those are who your friends are, is your fellow actors. You form such an amazing bond over a month of show time and at least for our troupe, it's just a way of life. We eat lunch in there. We live in the theatre. It's just who we are.

Although the interns frequently expressed anti-racist perspectives, they avoided direction confrontation of racial injustice in favor of other social issues, especially LGBTQ+ rights. Although the interns did talk about racial issues intermittently throughout their discussions, none of them specifically addressed racial issues in their activist artworks. And yet, the internship was configured as a figured world where the interns could feel free to express their political views—whether it fully realized this potential is up for debate.

The Political Climate: New Orleans, Louisiana, USA, Summer 2016

Political factors shape the landscapes of figured worlds. One of the most politicized events in recent memory in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina. While Katrina left an indelible mark on the landscape of New Orleans, the political climate remains ever-changing and other issues have come to take a more central place in political discourses. During the summer of 2016, some of the major factors in the political climate in the United States included the presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, key events in the Black Lives Matter movement, and activism for the removal of confederate monuments.

The Republication National Convention where Donald Trump received the Republication nomination and the Democratic National Convention where Hillary Clinton received the Democratic nomination both took place during the summer of 2016. The presidential election of 2016 was dominated by bigoted rhetoric from Donald Trump and his supporters. The interns were informed and aware about the political climate and some had created art that was critical of Trump's rhetoric. For example, Jasmine shared a political cartoon that she created and shared on social media about Trump's support from the KKK (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5. Jasmine's political cartoon in an Instagram post.

Throughout the internship, there were several mentions of the outrageousness of Trump's xenophobic bombast. For example, during a poetry workshop, the interns created "erasure poems" by taking an existing text and erasing and/or rewriting it for activist purposes. Several people utilized Trump's Republican National Convention speech for this purpose. One intern, Nora, transforming the sentiment of the text from anti-immigrant to pro-immigrant (Figure 5.6). However, although we were on the eve of a highly contentious presidential election, the interns seemed to take for granted that Trump would not win the presidency and thus he was not a central topic of focus.

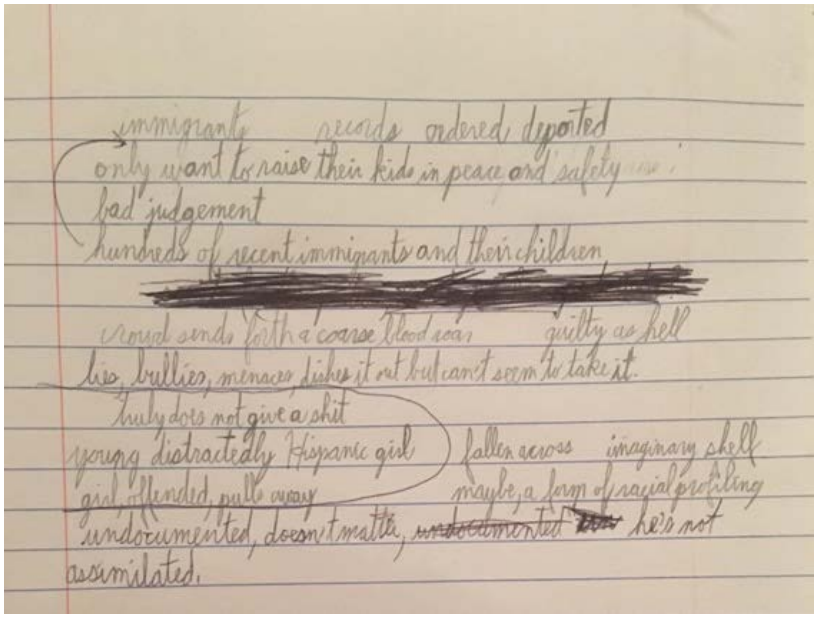

Figure 5.6. Nora's reworking of Trump's RNC speech from poetry workshop.

The issues surrounding police violence against Black people and the Black Lives Matter movement were also at the forefront of the political climate in the summer of 2016. The internship took place amidst heated protests over police violence against Black people. The internship started a few days after the Alton Sterling and Philando Castile killings and there were several discussions about Black Lives Matter during the program. Much of this discussion was around allyship because most of the interns did not identify themselves as Black, but all seemed

supportive of Black Lives Matter. One of the biggest discussions during the internship around Black Lives Matter was during Stella's presentation on "Art as Activism" where she provided definitions and examples of the connections between art and activism in preparation for intern-generated activist artworks. In our interview, Lucy, a White female, described previous artworks that she had created in alignment with Black Lives Matter movement, including an artwork that used the slogan "Hands Up, Don't Shoot" that became a rallying cry of the movement during protests against police killings of Black people in Ferguson, Missouri. I asked Lucy to elaborate on her identification as an ally to the Black Lives Matter movement. Lucy replied:

> I've always been very involved in civil rights issues and political issues. I was raised very, very liberal and I still stand by that and I have a lot of friends who have the same politics as I do, and I've gotten older, I've come to understand more about the crimes that take place against people of color, especially Black people, even now, even in a supposedly modern and civilized era. I've come to understand this discrimination and this violence that takes place against them on a much deeper level and on much deeper concepts such as environmental racism or the like. Coming to understand that has made me much more aware of these things that take place and I've become more involved in movements like Black Lives Matter and I do consider myself an ally to these movements because I would like to fight alongside Black people who are affected by these issues and make a difference.

Jasmine also expressed strong support for Black Lives Matter and described connection the movement to her "Social Injustice Series" of paintings. However, although the interns supported the Black Lives Matter movement, and some addressed it in their personal artwork, when it was time to create activist works as part of the internship, none did so.

In New Orleans during the summer 2016, I observed several convergences of the artworld and political activism against racial injustice. Over the past few years, there have been numerous efforts towards the removal of monuments to the confederacy such as flags and statues. When I first arrived in town to begin my research, I was invited to join in a Black Lives Matter protest at Lee Circle, a confederate monument located only a few blocks away from the

CAC. Although the purpose of this particular protest was in response to the killings of Black men by police, the location of the protest at a confederate monument site was significant. During this protest, one of the speakers called out, "Artists, we need you."

Activism against racial injustice and the artworld converged once again during White Linen Night, an event where New Orleans art galleries and museums including the CAC host a series of openings as patrons wear white linen. During this event, there was a protest demanding the removal of confederate monuments such as Lee Circle where protestors wore Black, in contrast with the art patrons who were wearing white linen, and participated in a "die in." This event took place the day after the internship ended and several interns served as volunteers on behalf of the CAC at this event. This event collided with the movements to remove the confederate monuments including the one located at Lee Circle. By May 2017, four confederate monuments in New Orleans, including the Lee Circle monument, had been removed.

The Figured World of School Art Education

Artist identity development is influenced by different sites of art education such as school, home, community arts programs, friends, and various forms of media (Hamblen, 2002). Compared to school art education, some of the interns felt that the out-of-school internship at the CAC offered a greater opportunity to work together with a group of youth who were specifically interested in careers in the arts. James noted that at the CAC, his fellow interns were "much more passionate" about careers in the arts as compared to his fellow students at school, saying:

> Everyone here signed up to be here and everyone here was picked to be here and it's something that each person here clearly wants to do and is clearly absorbing the same way that I am and using all of these amazing networking opportunities and all of these opportunities to grow as an artist whereas in arts in high school, sometimes it's just to pass the time or "I want this for my college resume."

Some of the interns attended a specialized arts school, NOCCA (New Orleans Center for Creative Arts). Jasmine, when asked about some of the good things about growing up in New Orleans, said:

> There's definitely one good thing about growing up in New Orleans: NOCCA. NOCCA is a very accepting environment. So, they try not to do anything like that and be very inclusive for everyone. I did go to a predominantly White school for freshman year of high school, but then I switched because they wouldn't let me continue going to NOCCA.[4] Now, I go to a predominantly Black school.

Many of the interns showed that they nurtured specific aspects of their artistic development within school art classes, one where the development of technical art skills is highly valued, but where art for social justice purposes or art that contains controversial content is to be avoided. Several interns described being dissuaded from creating activist artwork within school-based confines. Politically-motivated art was often deemed inappropriate for school, although this varied depending on what kind of school the students attended. Those who attended private and/or Catholic schools were more likely to express this sentiment.

However, attending a school that has a reputation for being very celebratory of the arts does not necessarily preclude the instances when the arts weren't especially encouraged. For example, Tristan recalled:

> At home, I was always drawing and things like that. I had a lot of trouble concentrating in class and stuff. I never really wanted to do my work. I wanted to look out the window and go have fun and play and stuff like that. I feel like most, a lot, of artists are like that. They don't feel like conforming to everyday tasks. It's nothing purposeful. It's just something I could never do. I would always have trouble with it. I remember in second grade, we were working on this art project and my teacher, she was like, "Okay, guys, it's time to put the markers down and pay attention." And I kept coloring and she took the marker from my hand and threw it across the classroom. I was like, "Wait. I'm not done. I have to finish."

[4] Jasmine attends NOCCA for half of the school day and an historically-Black, all-girls Catholic school for the other half of the school day.

One of the major discourses about schools and the arts is the notion that school art environments are restrictive and that there is less "freedom" for artistic expression in schools than outside of them (Efland, 1976). Indeed, many of the interns described more "freedom" in creating art outside of school settings as opposed to within school settings. Cecilia said, "I really don't like work that I do at school. I think it's less personal and I really, I've never listened to the rules." Yet, some of the interns found value in the skills they learned within school art education as Alex noted:

> I know that the stuff I do at school is helping me to build my skills. I guess it's different because when I'm at home, I guess I can be freer with materials that I use for a project instead of having to be like, "Okay, we're using graphite for this" or "We're using charcoal."

Although valued for teaching artistic skills, schools were also characterized as limiting the agency of those who are seeking to express themselves artistically. Tristan described the ways that schools and other institutions where art education takes place are somewhat restrictive, saying: "Certain assignments you'll have to do it in a certain style. I don't usually like that. I like to have as much freedom as I can possibly have in art. You're limiting what I can do."

Access to this purported "freedom" went beyond materials and styles, though, to subject matter. Although there is more room for activist takes on art education outside of school and ostensibly there is room for more agency, access to such is limited. Being homeschooled for the past year and a half (by taking high school classes online), Rose described some of the differences between traditional public schooling and homeschooling:

> I think you have more freedom…. Sometimes, I'll want to do a mental illness project. I probably would not be able to do that at public school because it's too dark. It's certain little things that teenagers right now want to do, bring awareness to things and adults at public schools or private schools or any school will not allow you to do because it's "too much." I think you have more freedom and more space to be yourself, which I think is very important that teenagers have, which is why I think that after school art programs are very important.

Lucy said that she had been motivated to create art with an activist perspective outside of school:

> I think I incorporate activist aspects into the art that I do at home, definitely. Because, at school, you have specific things you have to do. If a teacher says, "Draw a shell," you're going to draw a shell. At home, I do work on a good bit of art and I think quite a bit of it does have activist themes. I made pieces and I'm working on pieces related to Black Lives Matter because I think a lot of activism that I'm interested in is a good subject for art that I do.

In out-of-school art education spaces like this, the interns felt that they had greater opportunities to develop themselves as artists who uses art as a tool for social justice. The mobilization of art for social justice is restricted within school spaces, but that there is more potential for it within community-based art programs that adopt a specific social justice focus.

Positional Identities in the New Orleans Educational Landscape

Although several of the interns noted differences between in-school artmaking and out-of-school artmaking, the interns attended a variety of different schools and therefore had very different educational experiences. In New Orleans, when you meet someone new, they often ask, "Where did you go to school?" (usually referencing K-12 schooling). Because, for the most part, schools in New Orleans are highly segregated, this school identification can signify race, class, religion, gender, and other socially positioning factors.

During a gallery walk field trip during the internship, I observed a glimpse of how the interns made sense of the race and class-oriented hierarchies associated with specific schools. Alex, who is White, began talking about the International School of Louisiana (ISL), a French, Spanish, and Mandarin language immersion school with a majority-Black population, where he went to elementary and middle school. He said, "ISL is so ghetto." Joey, who attends Jesuit, a mostly White, all-boys Catholic school thought that Alex was talking about Lusher being considered "ghetto." Joey seemed to be surprised to hear Lusher described in this way. Lusher,

although it is a public school, it is one of the only public schools with a sizeable population of White students. He said, "Lusher?" Alex noted that he was discussing ISL, not Lusher. He said, in disbelief: "I was about to say, Lusher?" Lucy, who is White and attended the French language immersion program at Audubon then jumped into the conversation. Alex asked Lucy, "Do you speak French? Bonjour." Alex, realizing that the use of the term "ghetto" was derogatory, then said of ISL, "Sketchy. It was kind of sketchy. Not the ideal place for children. Ghetto is not the right word. I'm sorry I said that."

Where one goes to school places you in a social position. Jasmine described some of this racial dynamic within the schools in New Orleans:

> There is definitely racism here in New Orleans. Definitely. When I went to high school for freshman year at a mostly-White Catholic girls school, that was my first encounter with racism because my elementary school didn't have anything like that. Then, I realized that it existed, and I started looking up things and learning more about Black history, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Harlem Renaissance. I just started going to a mostly-Black school and now they teach more of it, but we definitely don't learn much about Black history.

Experiencing the city thus varies based upon one's social positioning around race and class. And, one's experience of one of the most significant events in recent New Orleans history, Hurricane Katrina, varied widely based upon factors of race and class.

The Catholic Church and Schools in New Orleans

New Orleans culture has a longstanding connection to Catholicism and a deeply embedded tradition of Catholic schools under the domain of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Catholic schools have been instrumental forces in maintaining racial and class-based segregation within the city. Many White and Black middle-class families send their children to Catholic schools as a means of avoiding public schools that, as a consequence, are disproportionately

attended by Black students of low socioeconomic status (Bankston & Caldas, 2002). Within my own family, even though my parents are advocates for public schools and my father was a public-school teacher, when my sister did not get accepted into my highly selective public high school, the only public high school with a sizeable White population of students at the time, my parents sent her to Catholic high school rather than one of the open enrollment public high schools that had majority-Black populations.

Seven of the interns attended Catholic schools and/or were raised in the Catholic church and this impacted their identity formation. The Catholic church and Catholic schools in New Orleans function as a significant contextual figured world. James attended a co-educational Catholic school. Olivia attended an all-girls Catholic school for part of the day and an arts high school for part of the day. Jasmine went to two different Catholic high schools—one predominantly White and the other predominantly Black—over the course of her educational career as well as to a specialized public arts high school. Joey attended an all-boys Catholic high school. Alyssa, Clara, and Cecilia all attended different all-girls Catholic schools.

Even those who attended public schools talked about the influence of the Catholic church on their lives. For example, during the poetry workshop session of the internship as well as during our interview, Tristan, who had attended the same New Orleans public school throughout his education, discussed the negative influence of Catholicism on his life—saying that he was raised in the Catholic church, but that he was "not religious" and felt that "religion isn't necessary." Indeed, most described the Catholic church as oppressive and stated that it hindered their sense of being able to "be themselves." This was particularly true for the interns who identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community. Zoe, who attended a public high school

outside of New Orleans, also discussed the influence of the Catholic church as oppressive stating, “In church, I was told, I needed to change my sexuality.”

During the poetry workshop session of the internship, several of the interns wrote poetry about their conflicted feelings about Catholicism. For example, Olivia called Catholicism a “hateful religion” and repeated phrases such as “you’re going to hell” and “repent, repent” that are often used within the religion. Because many of the interns have attended Catholic schools and/or grew up in the Catholic church, they had a shared experience with this and the discussions around Catholicism were passionate. Within the secular confines of the arts internship, they seemed relieved to be able to speak freely about their experiences with the Catholic church.

In art education, the performance piece, *Big Gay Church*, is presented each year at the National Art Education Association National Convention, addressing interconnected experiences between religious, artistic, and LGBTQ+ identities (Sanders, Cosier, Rhoades, Wolfgang, & Davenport, 2013; Wolfgang & Rhodes, 2017). Yet, LGBTQ+ individuals continue to experience discrimination in art educational settings (Check, 2004; Check & Ballard, 2014) and more work needs to be done by art educators to build more “queer-affirming” (Cosier & Sanders, 2007, p. 22) and “trans-affirming” (Pérez Miles & Jenkins, 2017) educational spaces.

Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans

In New Orleans, because Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath was so significantly life-altering that the life histories of those who lived through it are often told in terms of “pre-Katrina” and “post-Katrina.” Although the intern participants were quite young (between the ages of 4-8) when Hurricane Katrina happened, they acknowledged its significance even as they sometimes minimized its impact on their lives. One of the interns, Lucy, who is White and

described her family as "fairly well-off" economically, said that "We live uptown and we had pretty much no flooding," she had offered astute observations of the impact of Katrina on the city of New Orleans. Lucy said:

> Meeting people from other cities, when you tell them, "Oh, I'm from New Orleans," their mind jumps to Bourbon Street, Mardi Gras, Katrina. I feel like a lot of people don't really understand what Katrina really encompassed and how it affected different people, different groups, and people from different parts of the city, how it really did affect people in very diverse ways. But, also, people really just don't understand it and they don't understand when it's appropriate to bring it up and when it's not because even over ten years later, it's still really painful to think about and remember, even as someone who wasn't deeply affected by it. It's still something that stays with you and I feel like a lot of people who aren't from New Orleans, who moved here post-Katrina, they really don't understand what it means to have experienced the storm.

Lucy's narrative points to the "diverse ways" Katrina impacted "different people, different groups, and different parts of the city," acknowledging that those with socioeconomic advantages were less severely impacted.

Despite their efforts to downplay the impact of Katrina several interns described the returning to New Orleans after the evacuation period as a haunting experience. Cecilia, who said she spent part of her evacuation at Disney World, described her return as follows:

> Once we came home was when the reality hit, seeing all the houses destroyed. When we came back to our street, it was like nothing happened and everybody's houses: green grass, sprinklers going off, and the sun is shining, but once we stopped at our house, it looked like a crime scene. It looked like a haunted mansion. If you ever seen, there's a movie called *Haunted Mansion*, that's what our house looked like. There was a huge tree on it and it was a big grey cloud around our house. Everybody's house was perfect, and our house had a huge tree on it and everybody threw their trash into our house. There were mattresses and trash bags. We're like, "Just because our house was destroyed, it doesn't mean we aren't coming back."

Alex, whose home was "damaged to the point where we're still fixing it, but not as damaged as some houses" also recounted the return after Katrina in eerie terms:

> I remember getting back from Katrina. I don't remember looking at anything in the city other than my house because that was the most important thing to me at the time. Very desolate and weird. Coming back, all the windows were boarded up. It's super-quiet.

> You can see the water line where the water was. There's stuff everywhere in the street. Trees have fallen down. Cars have flooded. It was a mess.

I asked Alex if Katrina has had any effect on him as an artist. He replied:

> I feel like I was too young to have it affect me the way that if affected other people. I remember leaving and I remember coming back, but I don't remember how catastrophic it actually was. I guess, as a kid, I wasn't aware of exactly how big that event was and since my experience wasn't all that catastrophic for me, I feel like if I tried to make art that tried to depict it as catastrophic, it wouldn't be authentic to my experience because to me it was a storm. I came back. Some things were messed up. Other people, they stayed at home. They couldn't leave. They died. They had their houses completely underwater, their roofs floating. They had to be rescued. It's not an experience I can imagine going through. I can't imagine knowing what it's like. So, yes, it affected me, but not in a way where I can make something out if it that people who went through it differently than I did can connect to it.

In relation to art and Katrina, Lily noted:

> I haven't created any art related to Katrina, but I can look at Katrina art and I can feel emotions. Some of them are just so touching that it can bring a wave of that sadness. I was young. So, part of it was kind of like an adventure to me, but I knew what was going on. So, I think I kind of have a little bit of that to feel.

Joey stated that "We got 8 feet of water. We lived pretty close to the levee and it's gone now. I did lose my old life. All the memories of it were just gone." However, he did not seem to be particularly devastated by the event, saying, "It's just something that happened that we had to go through. We were lucky. We got a new house over there. We were fine." Yet, he acknowledged that many people "didn't have the money available to go live another life for a little while. It affected a lot of people a lot more than it did me." In Joey's Katrina story, as well as that of many of the interns, there was a sense of dissonance—for the most part, they claimed to be somewhat unaffected by the storm, but in other ways, they did seem somewhat haunted by it. Tristan was also relatively indifferent over the impact of Katrina on his life, saying, "There's so much more going on right now that I kind of forget that Katrina even happened at times." For

all of the interns in this group, though, there was an acknowledgement that their experiences were not nearly as devastating as those of people who lost their lives and their livelihoods.

Several of the interns noted the race-based and class-based injustices associated with the response to Katrina. Lucy expressed disgust at "what went on during Katrina for Black people in this city, and how they were completely screwed over and got no help and were basically left to die by FEMA and George Bush." Comparing the response to Katrina to that of other U.S. hurricanes, Tristan said, "After Katrina, they didn't really renew the city as much as they could have. When they had Hurricane Sandy, they got on that right away, but down here, they didn't really care." Although the interns themselves seemed to have been shielded from the worst effects of Katrina due to their relatively privileged positionalities, they demonstrated an awareness of how the injustices around Katrina were magnified for those who were Black and/or those who were living in poverty.

New Orleans as a Place of Inequity

Even beyond the injustices associated with Katrina, the interns acknowledged the entrenched race-based and class-based inequities at work within the city. As Jasmine noted emphatically: "Definitely racism here in New Orleans. Definitely." Because Black men and boys are disproportionately affected by gun violence in New Orleans, many parents of Black children keep their children indoors during the summer to avoid harm. As Tristan stated:

> In the beginning of the summer, I told my parents that I didn't want to go to any kind of camps or anything like that. I wanted to be able to have freedom and go outside and going out with friends and my dad, he was kind of against that because of how dangerous it is in the summer and at first, I didn't understand why he was making me stay inside, but now I understand that, but it still is really limiting and it's kind of depressing at times that I have to stay inside because I need to be around people. If I'm not around people, I'll just be introverted.

It was interesting to see how Tristan connected the way his parents were hindering the social creativity process by trying to keep him safe.

Of Louisiana, Joey said, "It's a red Catholic state, basically. The people are racist and homophobic and sexist and very Republican." Indeed, the interns frequently described New Orleans and Louisiana as a place with racism, inequality, few opportunities. And yet, they did not often openly acknowledge their own roles, as people of relative privilege, in maintaining systematic inequities. Most would have likely acknowledged that it was a privilege to be able to participate in this internship, but they might not necessarily think about how or why others might be excluded from this opportunity. Perhaps they did not talk about this because they did not see themselves as privileged—they indeed had their own struggles with their peers, with their family, or with their sexuality. Or, perhaps this was because they were seeking to stake an exclusive, yet precarious position in the artworld by their participation in the internship.

New Orleans: "The Whole City is Art"

When asked to point out positive aspects of life in New Orleans, many of the interns pointed to the strong arts and cultural traditions of the city. The interns depicted New Orleans as a place where the arts are embedded into daily life, as Cecilia said, "The whole city is art." When asked about some of the positive aspects of living in New Orleans, Cecilia again invoked the arts:

> A lot of it has to do with the art, the atmosphere, everything is so, especially when you go to the French Quarter, everything is so crazy and colorful. It's just the people you see when you're walking around. Everyone is weird. That's how I describe it. Everyone is so strange, and they don't care. You see some interesting things when you walk down the street, especially in the French Quarter. You see all this art everywhere. Everyone is somehow trying to make a living off of being in the city and there are people willing to support that. Whether you see a man sitting with a cup of change with a guitar or there's

> an artist with all their paintings set out, everyone's trying to support each other. Everyone has some sort of artistic background.

In describing New Orleans, Alex also focused on the arts when depicting the city:

> Everywhere you walk, every street, you're going to see some kind of art. You're going to see something that has to do with the arts. It doesn't matter what street you're on, whether it's architecture, the color of someone's house, their garden. They're playing music, they have some art hanging up in their yard or something. Everywhere. I feel like that's a very rare thing. Also, you can walk down the street and hear somebody playing music. That's awesome.

Lucy also offered some vivid descriptions of her perceptions of the best things about growing up in New Orleans:

> Mardi Gras as a local. You go from sitting on your parent's shoulder at Muses to you get older and you go to Amelia Street or whatever. It's always fun. It's always something you enjoy. You never grow out of it, I feel. You're going from age four to as soon as you leave for college. I think it's something you don't ever grow out of and I've always really loved it. The city itself has so many weird, unique little things to explore—things that New Orleans kids know about. It's the place when you come back after you've been gone a while and immediately you know you are home and you can get right back into your old routines. It's just a very home-y city. You never really lose that part of yourself.

In Lucy's description, she demonstrates how embedded the culture of the city becomes to one's identity. When Lucy said this, I could completely relate—I also feel as though I will never lose my identification with New Orleans as home. Despite their celebratory acknowledgements of the impact of the deeply creative aspects of New Orleans and Louisiana culture, many of the interns also expressed a desire to leave the city in search of greater opportunities to fulfill their artistic goals.

Imagining Artistic Futures beyond New Orleans

While many of the interns appreciated specific aspects of New Orleans as a place with a rich artistic heritage, they also saw it as a place with limited opportunities for advancement of

their goals as artists. As they looked to the future, many of the interns pictured themselves as part of the broader art world beyond their hometown. They envisioned becoming a part of the broader artworld in the future. For example, when I asked Jasmine about her thoughts on New Orleans, she replied, "I don't really pay attention to things going on in New Orleans, locally. I'm more on a national scale." Although he appreciated many aspects of New Orleans culture, Tristan expressed a motivation to go to either New York or Los Angeles to pursue opportunities:

> Looking into the culture and stuff down here in New Orleans, I get influenced, but then again, it's sort of too small down here. It's hard to get yourself out there. There are opportunities out here, but it's hard to find them. I want to move to a bigger city, so I can have more opportunities and meet more people.

Cecilia also had goals of leaving New Orleans to pursue a career in a larger city with more perceived opportunities, saying: "My dream is to be in New York or LA, especially with what I want to do. That's where there's the most opportunities…. New Orleans is great, but it doesn't have the opportunities that I want." When I asked Alex about whether he wanted to stay in New Orleans, he replied:

> No, because, even though New Orleans is a special city, I want to find my own special city. New Orleans will always be my home and the place I came from and the place that I grew up, but I want to, everywhere else in Louisiana except New Orleans kind of sucks. I'm sorry, but I'm going to say, it's pretty shitty. It's a pretty shitty state. I feel like New Orleans is its own country. I just want to find a new place. I've been here my whole life. I want to explore. I'm a very adventurous person. I want to get out. I want to find new places, new cool cities that have rich cultures and lots of art and music.

In contrast with many of the other interns' views of leaving New Orleans for broader opportunities in places like New York, Joey said, "I don't like New York at all. I think it's a place of broken dreams." This perspective was counter to that of many of the other interns—many of them had ambitions to move to New York or Los Angeles to pursue their artistic goals. Many expressed a desire to move to a larger city where they anticipated that there would be more opportunities for careers in the arts. Although I have never lived in New York or Los Angeles, I

moved away from New Orleans in pursuit of increased career opportunities in the arts—for the first time because of Hurricane Katrina—so, I could relate to the interns in this discussion. This desire for geographical movement in pursuit of the goal of becoming an artist brings us full circle in the context of a city where migration became so embedded through the event of Hurricane Katrina.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I examined how young artists depicted their experiences with some of the central figured worlds shaping their developing identities as artists. These figured worlds often focused on specific places—the landscapes of their identity formation. Yet, these landscapes are also influenced by ever-shifting factors like the political climate and by sociocultural identity factors like race, class, gender, and sexuality. This exploration of young artists' perceptions of the figured worlds that were constantly shaping their lives demonstrates that figured worlds are often experienced differently depending upon one's personal and positional identities. For example, although all of the interns engaged with the CAC, they experienced the CAC and the internship in different ways. Although they all had memories of Hurricane Katrina and share some similar perspectives on their experiences with the storm and its aftermath, they also diverged at points. While they all grew up in the educational landscape of New Orleans, they attended different types of schools—arts-based, language immersion, or religious schools, for example—and some were homeschooled.

There is always a push and pull within figured worlds. For example, the figured world of New Orleans is depicted as a comforting home rich in the arts and culture, but also inequitable and lacking opportunity. The figured world of school arts programing is described as great for

skill development, but also restricting. To fully develop themselves as artists, the interns expressed a need to leave their hometown and to create art outside of the confines of schools. This movement (or desire for movement) between larger worlds and local worlds illustrates the ever-shifting landscapes at work in identity formation.

The CAC internship functioned as sort of a microcosm of the artworld. The spaces of the internship felt like "safe spaces" to some, but not to others. The search for figured worlds where the interns felt a sense of "belonging" seemed to lead many of the interns to the figured world of "the arts." For example, in describing his movement towards an artist path, James stated: "As I started to meet people in the arts and as I started to surround myself with other artists, thinking that it was just a hobby, I started to realize that's where I belong." And yet, just as Tristan expressed feeling "awkward" within the internship context, not everyone feels that they "belong" in the artworld. As Ahmed (2014) states: "discomfort is a feeling of disorientation: one's body feels out of place, awkward, unsettled" (p. 148). Further, feeling a sense of "belonging" in rarified spaces such as specialized arts programs could be considered an exclusionary practice that reinforces inequitable social stratifications (Gaztambide-Fernández & Parekh, 2017). An overt discussion of equity and access to artistic identity formation was absent from the internship, likely because the interns were mostly focused on their own individual strivings. Yet, from my view, there were clearly some excluded perspectives on the consequences of artist identity development.

CHAPTER 6

ARTIST IDENTITY WORK ACTIVITIES

In this chapter, I examine how artist identity work manifests in activities. Whereas the narrative portraits focused on how individual interns engaged in identity work in their self-narratives, this chapter focuses on how the interns engaged in identity work within the social landscape of the arts internship. According to social practice theory, identities are understood as being formed in social contexts, "spaces of authoring" (Voloshinov, 1929/1973, p. 87), where the creation of the self happens continuously. Within contexts of self-authoring, both narrative and activity-based social practices are at work. Holland et al. (1998) describe Leontiev's (1978) "activity theory" as such:

> Activity theory…views people as *actively* engaged with the environment. They are always in the flow of doing something—the something being a historical, collectively-defined, socially produced activity—and it is within this meaningful intent toward their surroundings that they respond to whatever they encounter in the environment. (p. 39)

In this chapter, I present my accounting of a series of artist identity work activities as I observed them within the social interactions of the internship. I connect this chapter with portraiture methodology's focus on "relationship" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) because the identity work activities described herein, all took place within richly social contexts and were intimately shaped by the social interchange between the participants.

Realizing that there was synchronicity between the analytical themes that I had constructed about artist identity work and the narrative arc of the story of this internship, I decided to structure this chapter around events representative of each of these major thematic findings about activities of artist identity formation. Because the internship was so closely geared towards the development of teen artists, this was likely an intentional development by the educators at the contemporary arts center. Indeed, each of the key activities of the arts internship

aligned with one of the identity work activities that I have identified: Artist Self-Reflection, Art Learning: Art as Activism, Making and Presenting (Activist) Art, Artworld Exploration: Gallery Walk, Artist Mentoring: Poetry Workshop, Teaching Art, Art- and Self-Presentation.

I thus present a series of illustrative vignettes to demonstrate these artist identity work activities. By using illustrative stories, I present the social interactions at work during practices of artist identity work, using these narrative vignettes to show how artist identity work practices happen in real-life social situations. There are a number of different forms of ethnographic writing including realist tales, confessional tales, and impressionist tales (van Maanen, 2011). Throughout the dissertation, I have used variations of all three of these types of tales. In this chapter, I attempted to create impressionist tales, ethnographic narratives drawn from observational field notes. Just as "impressionist painting sets out to capture a worldly scene in a special instant or moment of time" (van Maanen, 2011, p. 101), these narratives present an account of an event or series of occurrences. Within these impressionist tales, there is minimal analytical interruption and instead, "cultural knowledge is slipped to an audience in fragmented, disjointed ways" (van Maanen, 2011, p. 104). Van Maanen (2011) calls these impressionist tales "striking stories" (p. 101), terminology that I cannot help but connect to the concept of the phenomenological descriptions of "flashpoints" or "fleshpoints" that I have explored in other aspects of my research (Kraehe et al., 2016; Travis et al., 2018). Indeed, van Maanen describes how the description of the emotional and embodied aspects of impressionist tales take precedence over the overtly analytical aspects:

> Moans, cackles, and epithets, for example, are used to suggest the emotional involvement of the fieldworker in the impressionist tales and to intensify the events. The audience is asked to relive the tale with the fieldworker, not interpret or analyze it. The intention is not to tell readers what to think of an experience but to show from beginning to end and thus draw them immediately into the story to work out its problems and puzzles as they unfold. (p. 103)

My goal in presenting the activities of the internship as impressionist tales is not to act as a dispassionate observer, but to try to help the reader "experience something akin to what the fieldworker [I] might have experienced during the narrated events" (van Maanen, 2011, p. 104). Admittedly, it is difficult to completely capture experience in words that adequately convey lived experience. Each section begins with a brief overview of the artist identity work activity of focus and then transitions into an impressionist narrative of my observations of artist identity work practices in action.

Artist Self-Reflection

Young artists engage in self-reflection activities upon their burgeoning identities. Within the context of the internship, the interns' engaged in self-reflective journaling activities in the form of drawing and writing exercises in response to prompts written by their mentor, Stella (see Figure 6.1).

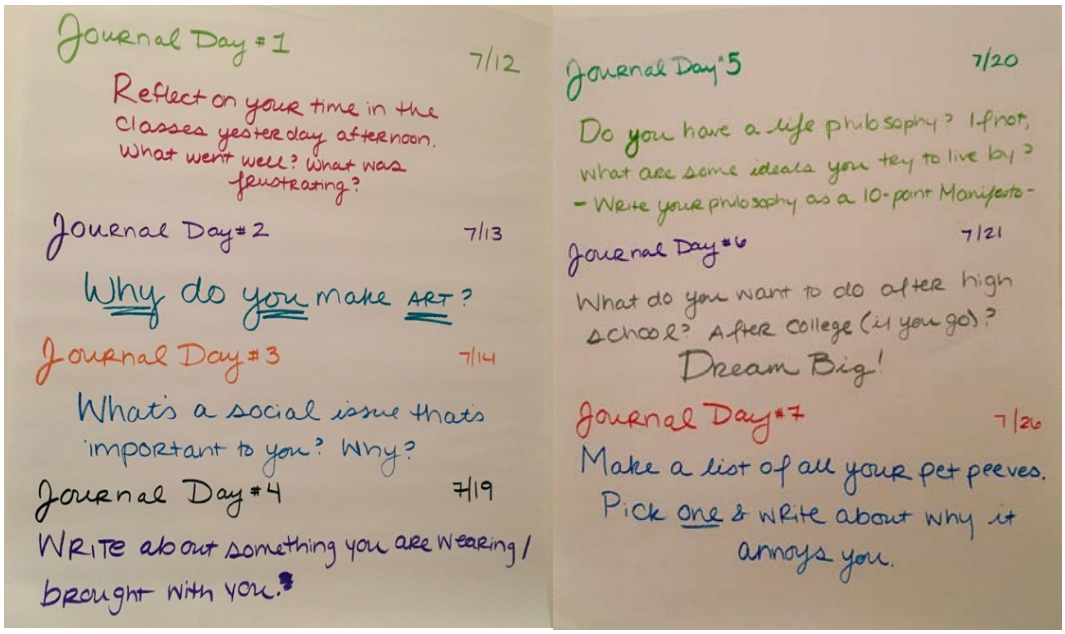

Figure 6.1. Journal prompt posters.

I asked Stella if I could document their journal entries and she said "no" because she wanted to

keep the journals as private spaces. Yet, although the exercises were done individually within the "private spaces" of the journals, they were nearly always shared with the others in the group. Within this social mode of the self-reflection process, the interns generated written and visual narratives and they engaged in verbal narratives while sharing their self-reflections with others.

"Why Do You Make Art?"

One of the first journal prompts was "Why do you make art?" After writing for a few minutes, the interns shared as Stella documented their responses on a poster (see Figure 6.2). Some described individual expressionistic benefits of making art. Joey said, "I make art because it makes me happy," Tristan said, "You can express how you feel," Lily said, "It's an outlet for energy," and Lauren said, "It's a language. Getting across something that I can't say with words." Others considered broader social implications. Rose said, "It changes people's point of view" and James asserted, "I want to be remembered for my art. It's an extension of myself that lasts a while."

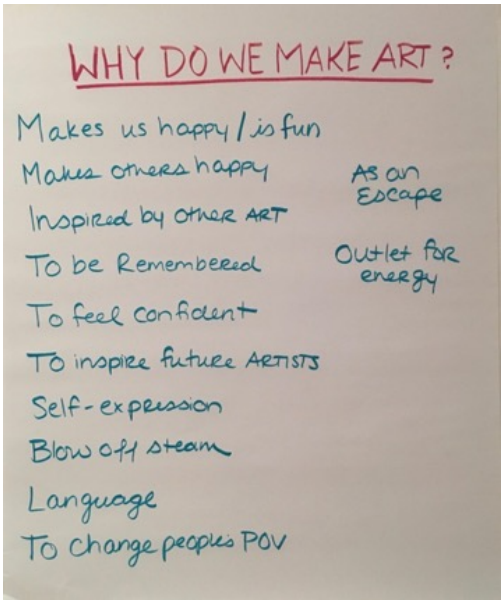

Figure 6.2. "Why do we make art?" poster.

"How Do You Make Art?"

After the journaling and discussion on the purposes of making art concludes, Stella moved onto another reflective prompt, saying, "Now I want to talk about *how* you make art. How do you approach it?" Some of the interns responded that they enjoyed working alone and that they needed to minimize distractions such as their smartphones to be able to work productively. Cecilia said, "If I'm doing a new piece, I can't have people around me. At school, I never got things done. A lot of people at school didn't take art seriously. I would go to the back of the room with my stuff." By contrast, Tristan expressed a need to spend time around others who shared common interests in order to fulfill aspects of his creative process: "You get inspiration from your friends. With me, I need to be around people that share common interests with me. I need to be able to share my energy with people and help people out." Many of the interns described the necessity of making a concerted effort to engage with the artmaking process. Rose said, "I listen to music and brainstorm. I try to get a bunch of ideas." Lauren responded, "I research other people who have done what I want to do and then get ideas." James then added, "I'll turn out all of my lights and imagine what I will do." Stella wanted the interns to use these thoughts to develop an ongoing revision to their artist statement.

"What Does Art Do?"

Stella asked the interns to consider, "Why is art important? Why even make art at all? What does art do?" After they completed writing in response to this prompt, the interns shared what they had written. Stella created a list of different purposes that art serves: Art for aesthetic or entertainment value, Art for individual expression, Art for societal/political statement (see Figure 6.3).

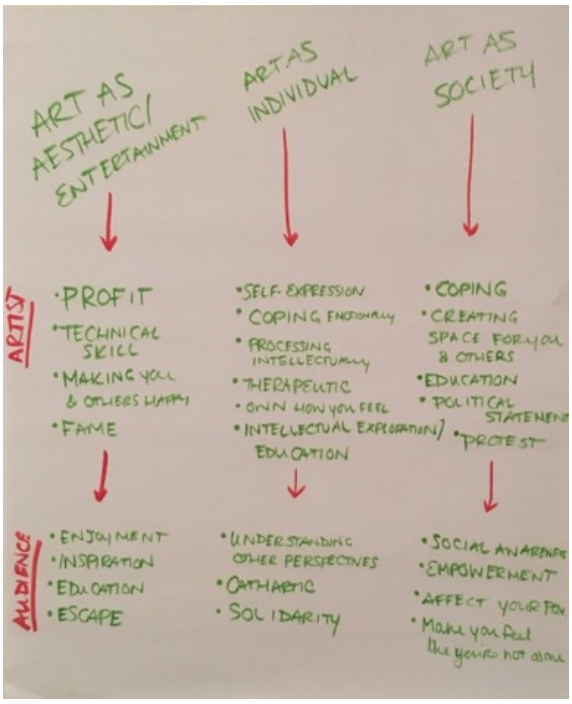

Figure 6.3. Purposes of art poster.

Lucy noted the connection between the personal and the political in the purposes of creating art, stating, "If one of your experiences is that you are a sexual assault victim, you are expressing a personal issue, but you are also making a political statement." Lauren agreed that art can bring about "social awareness." Stella asked for an example of this and Clara said, "Black Lives Matter." Someone else brought up *Exhibit BE*, a "collaborative graffiti environment" (Mac Cash, 2014) created by a group of New Orleans graffiti and street artists affiliated with Brandan "BMike" Odums that the intern described as "bringing attention to social issues in New Orleans." Herein, they applied discourses about what the arts "do" to their own motivations for making art (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008), and throughout the internship they worked to apply these ideas by learning about and creating activist art.

"Words to Live By"

Stella asked the interns to select a quote that represented their "words to live by" and to

create a visual representation of this "life philosophy." Many of the quotes that they selected were related to identity and/or being an artist. For example, Nora's quote, from Frida Kahlo was "I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best" (see Figure 6.4). Lily's quote was "Adventure is just hardship with an inflated sense of self" (see Figure 6.5). Natalie selected a quote from Lily Tomlin: "I always wanted to be somebody, but now I realize I should have been more specific" (see Figure 6.6). These quotes and their placement on the wall as a "group mural" acted as both tangible artifacts and narratives about themselves as artists.

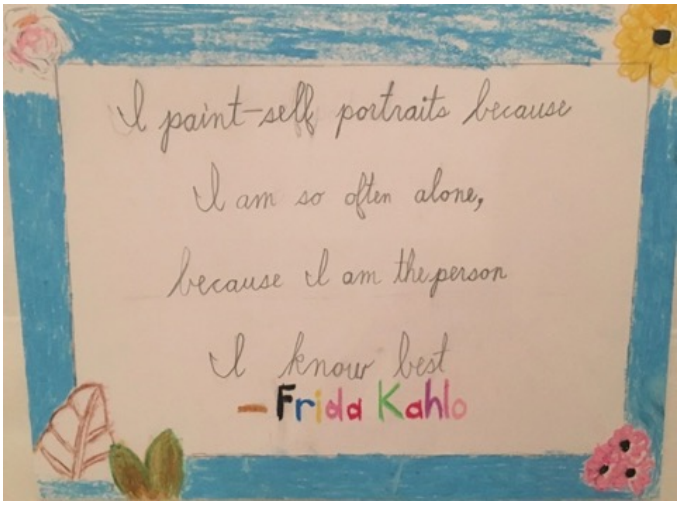

Figure 6.4. Nora's quote.

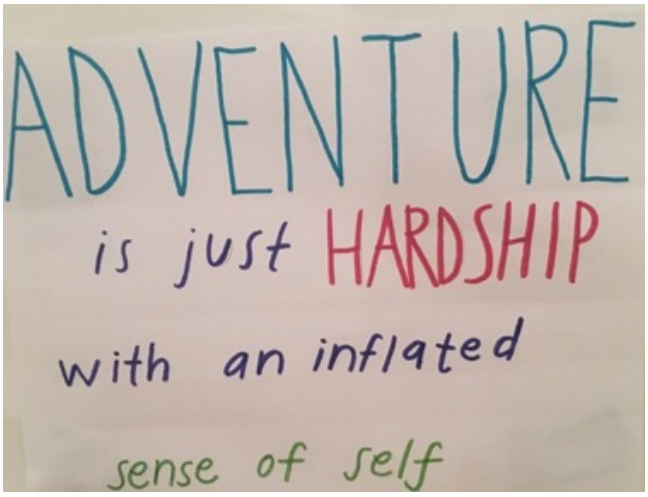

Figure 6.5. Lily's quote.

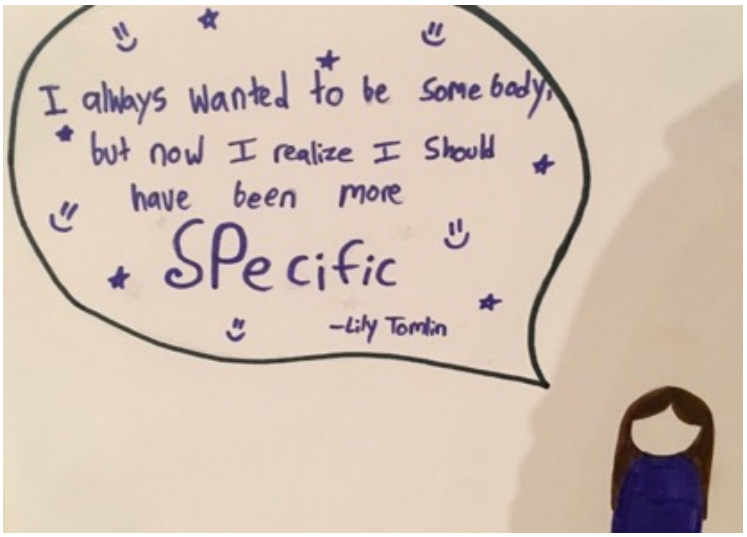

Figure 6.6. Natalie's quote.

"Dream Big"

Stella asked the interns to journal about their future goals, "What do you want to do after high school? After college (if you go)? Dream Big." Many of the interns responded with goals of moving to a large art-centric city like New York and all stated that they were planning to go to college. James said that he wants to major in film and media arts and minor in theatre so that he can become a video director and that he eventually wants to move to New York. Lucy said that she wants to study anthropology or evolutionary psychology and minor in art at a "small liberal arts college" like Reed in Oregon and then go on to graduate school at NYU [New York University]. She has an interest in archeology related to Pompeii, saying, "I want to dig stuff and dust it off." Cecilia said, "I want to go to New York and do musical theatre. I want to get a job in the music industry." Stella offered words of advice: "No matter what you major in, you'll pretty much end up doing something different." Further, she said, "our generation is different" and "there aren't a lot of long-term careers anymore." Stella said, "It's good to have a game plan and goals and aspirations but know that the plan might change."

Art Learning: Art as Activism

Art learning practices are central to artist identity formation and the form that this learning takes is influential in how one views art and its role in society. In the case of this internship, the young artists learned that art is a tool for activism and they had opportunities to create their own activist art based upon their learning. Art learning often takes different forms depending upon the contexts in which it occurs. Several interns noted the differences between art learning in school versus outside of school. Many acknowledged that school art learning is sometimes more restrictive than out-of-school art education. They noted that outside of school, there were more opportunities to engage with social justice themes within art learning and art creation. Indeed, a central goal of the internship seemed to be to educate the young artists about the activist potential inherent within the arts. In this section, I describe a lesson that Stella taught to the interns on "Art as Activism."

"Art as Activism"

Stella presented a lesson on "Art as Activism." She began by telling the students that they would discuss "ways that you can use art as activism in society." Stella said that many artists are "using social media as activism." She asked the interns, "Before we start, does anyone have any ideas of what art as activism means? What is activist art?" Nora said, that it is "a comment about a social event." Lauren said that it is "art that shows something that is happening in the world today." Lucy mentioned that "zines" are a form of activism. James said, that art as activism is associated with "the angry side of things. Protesting. Mourning. Showing the pain that people do through and a certain social aspect that should be changed." Tristan said that activist art is "art that incites people to change based on what they see." Rose said that activist

art is “bringing awareness to something that might not have a lot of attention.” Stella agreed that activist art often begins a “dialogue” and “incites you do something.” Stella defined activism as follows: “Activism consists of efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, or environmental change, or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society and to corrects social injustice.”

Stella told the interns that “activist art is necessarily public in some way” and that “resistance art is art used as a way of showing their opposition to power-holders.” Stella mentioned the recent resistance to police violence against Black people in the United States through the Black Lives Matter movement. She brought up the recent killing by Baton Rouge police of Alton Sterling and how, in protest, someone had spray painted “Justice for Alton” on the Lee Circle monument in New Orleans. This monument, an homage to Confederate general Robert E. Lee had been controversial of late and preparations for its removal were underway. Lucy mentioned that several people have spray painted “Black Lives Matter” on other confederate monuments as well. Stella noted that “Producing concrete social change is a big goal of protest art.” Indeed, in this case, there was some change in response to protests as the Lee Circle monument was removed in May 2017.

“Allyship versus Appropriation”: “Do you think the Identity of the Artist is Important?”

Throughout the internship, there were discussions about the ethics of being an artist, especially one who claims to be serving as an ally to marginalized populations by doing activist art. Tacitly acknowledging that many of the interns were working as activist artists from privileged positionalities, there were opportunities for the young artists to consider the ethical concerns in doing activist art from a positionality of privilege. During her activist art

presentation, Stella made a deliberate effort to bring these ambiguities between allyship and appropriation into the discourse.

Stella then described the work of a New Orleans artist called Ti-Rock Moore and their work, *Cracka Please* which is a stack of Premium brand saltine cracker boxes presented on a well-lit pedestal in a gallery (see MacCash, 2015). She asked the interns, "What does that mean?" Lucy said, "The cracker thing is supposed to be White people. It's on a pedestal and it's lit in a god-like way. It's putting White people on a pedestal even though we're not past racism." Stella, sarcastically, said, "Don't you know we live in post-racial America?" She then said, "Lauren, did you have something to say?" Lauren replied, "She said what I wanted to say." I saw this as a bit of a microaggression because Lucy, who is White had the opportunity to speak on this before Lauren, who is Black. Cecilia said, "It's obviously about white privilege. People call White people 'crackers.' It says, 'Premium.' It's pointing out white privilege." Stella asked, "Do you think the identity of the artist is important?" The consensus in the room is "Yes." Stella asked, "If you had to guess man or woman and what would you guess is the artist's racial identity?" Natalie said, "I would guess a man and I would guess African American." James said, "I'm thinking because you asked that it's a White woman." Stella replied, "It is a White woman. This is meant to be a satirical piece about her own whiteness. Does this change the way you interpret this piece?" Lucy said, "Yes, I think so. If it was a Black man, it would be different. You see it as White people calling themselves out rather than having to be called out by people of color and saying this is wrong."

Stella continued, "Ti-Rock Moore has another piece in Chicago. A lot of her work is

very racially-focused. She has a piece that is a full-scale replica of Michael Brown[5]'s body." Stella continued, asking the interns if it is acceptable for a White woman artist to create an artwork like this. She said, "From an activism standpoint, she's probably calling herself out. However, some things are okay, and some things are not." Stella invited the interns to discuss whether this work of art is an acceptable form of activism or whether it is merely exploitative. Some of the interns asked questions about the realism of the project: "How realistic was this?" and "I guess it depends on how detailed it was." Stella said that this was "a full scale lifelike replica." Notably, Stella did not show this artwork, she just described it. One intern said, "I feel like that crosses a line especially considering the artist's white privilege." Lucy said, "It almost feels like an appropriation of another community's mourning." Someone else asked, "What is the piece saying? Is it necessary to draw attention in that kind of visceral way to something that is fresh in a community in mourning?" Another intern said, "I don't think it matters what race you are. Just because it's a White person advocating for Black Lives Matter. Isn't that what we want?" Cecilia said, "Can I respond to that? Black Lives Matter is pioneered by Black people for Black people. People spearheading that movement should be Black."

Stella reminded the interns that "a big part of allyship is supporting a movement, but not taking it over." James, who identifies as gay, said, "If I walked through a gallery and all of the Orlando victims were in wax figures and face down, for me, it would be offensive if a straight person did it." Lily said, "I think the identity of the artist is important. Without the background, it could be seen as disrespectful." Stella added, "Be honest about your own experiences, what you can empathize with and what you can't." Stella brought up the concept of "allyship versus

[5] Michael Brown was a Black teenager who was killed by a White police officer in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014, an event that sparked widespread protests (The New York Times, 2014).

appropriation." Stella said, "Be honest about when you mess up or don't know the answer. If someone who is part of that group calls you out, own it. Be a trustworthy artist and honest role model." After discussing some other examples of activist art, Stella said, "We're going to be working on a project for the next few days on social issues impacting our community right now."

"Activist Issues"

On the next day, the interns brainstormed a group of activist issues that were of concern to them (see Figure 6.7).

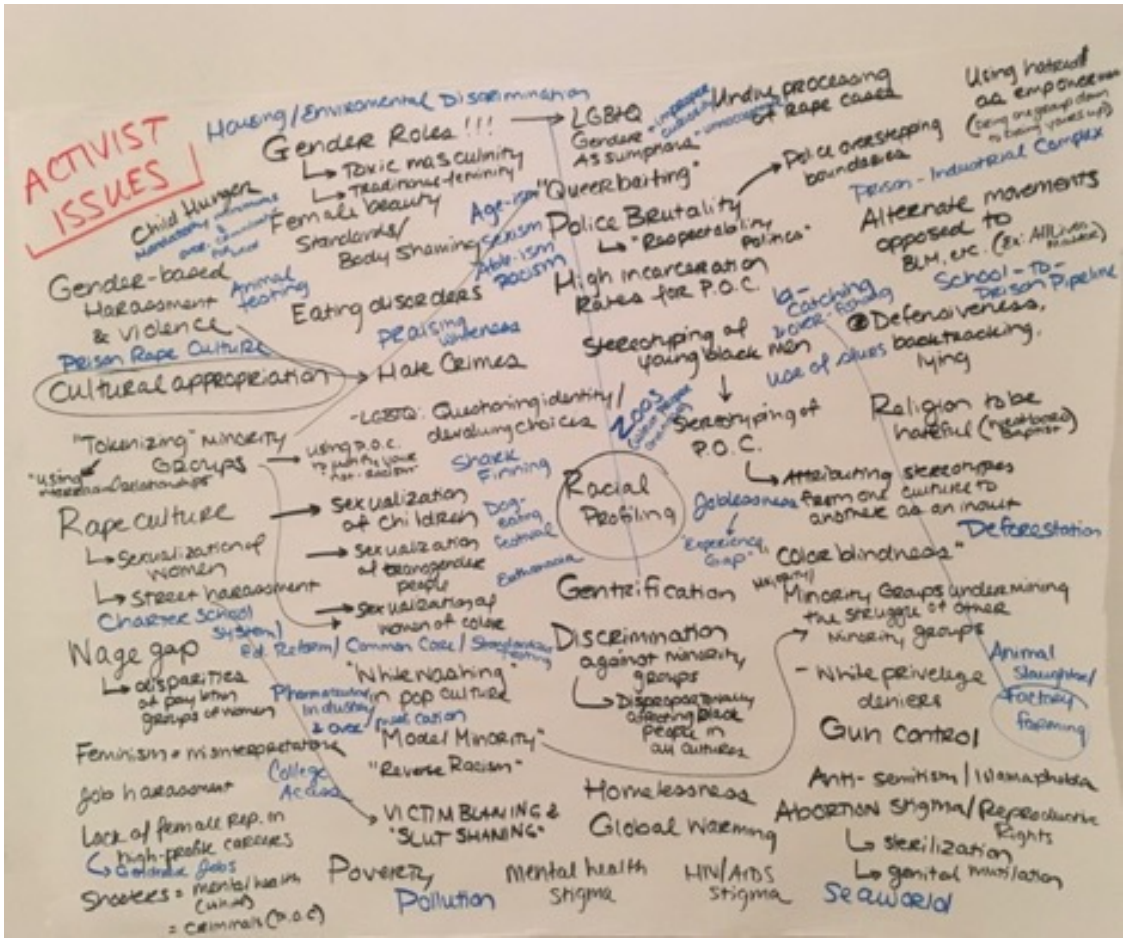

Figure 6.7. Activist issues brainstorm poster.

Through this process, the interns were not only planning to create art, they were also stating what topics they identified strongly with and those that they wanted to align their identities with. For

instance, a student who listed LGBTQ+ rights posited an alignment of themselves with the fight for rights for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Narratives were deployed in making the list: certain issues were very important to certain interns and they told stories about their experiences in relation to these issues. The poster became a starting point for discussions of art and social justice at several points. For example, during the poetry workshop, one of the poets referenced the poster to prompt the interns to write poems about one of the topics. During my interviews with the interns, I also referred to the poster as a tool to get them talking about activist issues that were important to them. This poster served as an artifact that was referenced throughout the internship as the participants to mediate discussions on social issues and how activist art can be used to respond to them.

Making and Presenting (Activist) Art

Making (activist) art is a key way of gaining admittance into the identification of self as an (activist) artist. Within artmaking activities, the interns employed tools such as paintbrushes, cameras, and musical instruments to create artifacts. Through these processes, they began to assert themselves as artists and as activists. Because of the art activism focus of the internship, many of the interns also described how they were becoming art activists aiming to express activist messages. For Joey's activist project, he wrote and performed a play entitled *A Day in the Life* relating to gay rights set to a series of songs by The Beatles, enlisting some of the other interns to perform as actors. Alyssa created a series of posters addressing child hunger in the United States, saying, "I personally don't experience hunger. I'm an ally." Nora created a series of watercolor paintings addressing environmental issues in Nicaragua, saying, "my mother is Nicaraguan, and I also care about the environment." Rose's activist artwork was a series of

photographs posted on the social media platform Instagram depicting teen girls dealing with mental health issues. Lily created a mixed media collage related to animal testing in the cosmetics industry, saying, "Animal rights is something I'm pretty passionate about. I became pescatarian in the 8th grade. So, that just kind of stuck as part of my identity."

"What's the Message?"

As the interns worked on their activist artwork, Stella went around and asked the interns about their progress on their artworks and offered encouraging feedback. For example, she asked Lucy, "What social issue did you select?" Lucy said that she focused on "LGBTQ+ issues." Stella asked, "What's the message?" Lucy's project was a poster with a quote from Marsha P. Johnson, a transgender woman of color activist: "No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us" (see Figure 6.8).

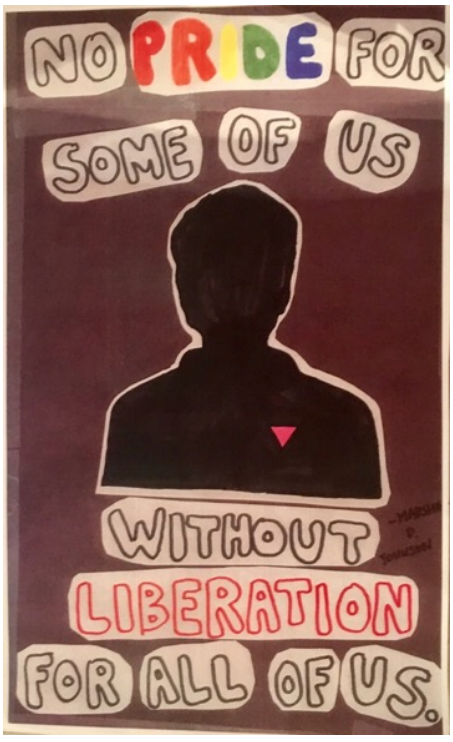

Figure 6.8. Lucy's activist artwork.

During Lucy's presentation of the poster, Stella repeated the quote: "No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us" and asked Lucy: "Does that quote remind you of something?" Lucy said that it did sound familiar. Stella pointed out that it is reminiscent of a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Stella then asked the interns, "What does that mean?" Cecilia talked about how people are often only concerned about injustice when it affects them directly. Stella noted that "Just because gay people can get married, it doesn't mean that everyone has equality" and that this was "a reminder to always keep pushing forward for equality and justice." Lucy explained why this topic was so important to her, personally: "I try to be involved in the community because I am bisexual, and I wanted to make a piece of art about that." Stella asked, "If you were to make this project public, what would you do? Mass produce these?" Lucy said that she would "make big signs" and "protest." Stella asked, "What's your target audience?" Lucy said, "Everyone, but especially people who are close-minded about what gay rights are, people who are close-minded about queer people in general and the violence that is endured by queer people."

Collaboration

Olivia placed a piece of black plastic on the floor. She was addressing rape culture in her art by making a dress that resisted slut shaming and rape culture using black plastic sheeting. We all took an opportunity to write something on the dress, including phrases like "star athlete," "slut," and "She was asking for it." Olivia said that the words on the dress are "Things that people will say to defend rapists." This was a collaborative artwork in that each of us (including me) were writing on the dress.

Figure 6.9. Olivia's rape culture resistance dress as modeled by James.

Upon completion of her project, Olivia had created a 1950s-style dress dealing with rape culture. James modeled the dress as the interns discussed the topic and the presentation of the activist issue of resistance to rape culture (see Figure 6.9). The dress was made of a black plastic material, resembling a garbage bag. Someone asked: "Why did you choose that material?" Olivia replied: "To show how women are disposable." Joey asked, "Can I see a spin?" In response, James spun around and posed. Lucy asked, "Why did you choose to have other people write on it?" Olivia replied, "To get different perspectives." Stella asked Olivia, "If you were to make this public, what would you do?" She replied, "Have it in a fashion show." Stella posed a question to the whole group: "This artist could have made a banner. How does the fact that this is a dress change the meaning?" Clara noted that this puts it in full perspective, the things people say, like "Her skirt was too short. She was asking for it" and noted that the work is "talking about the repercussions of rape culture." James said: "Women have to wear this every day.

They're never protected from this issue." Stella added to this: "As women, we don't get to choose not to be objectified. It's not something you can take off. You wear it on your skin, on your clothes."

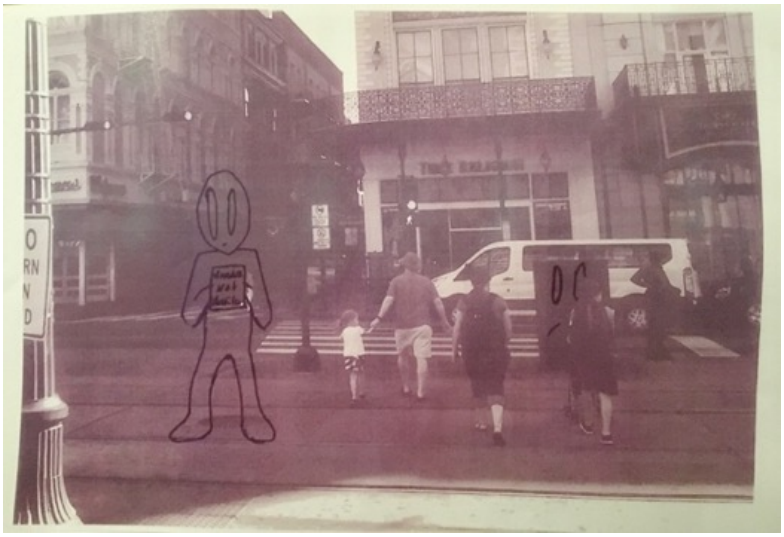

Figure 6.10. Lauren and Tristan's activist artwork.

Tristan and Lauren collaborated on a project addressing the issue of homelessness in New Orleans (see Figure 6.10). In describing their project to the group, they noted that there was a significant increase in homelessness after Hurricane Katrina and that this motivated them to make art to address this issue. To create their work, Lauren and Tristan took photos of people walking around the streets of New Orleans, printed the photos on transparent sheets, and then superimposed drawings of what they called "ghostly figures" to represent how the homeless are often ignored by more privileged members of society. One portion of Lauren's artist statement described both her perspective as a photographer and provides an interpretive perspective on her and Tristan's activist artwork:

> When you see a homeless person, what do you see? A fellow human being, someone just like you, or a burden to society? It is important to realize that the homeless population is just like us: at some point or another, they are us. Equality is something everyone should stand for.

During their presentation of the work, Tristan noted of the homeless that "People think it's people with drug issues or mental illness, but it could be anybody." In leading the discussion of Lauren and Tristan's work, Stella pointed out that "this is the first project that we've had today that is not directly about the artists' experiences." Lauren responded by saying, "I volunteer at a shelter in The East[6]. I see the people come in. They're just regular people. They should be respected." Tristan added, "You see homeless people every day. They are ignored." Stella said, "Sometimes it's easier to pretend it's not happening." Connecting her experience as a volunteer, Lauren replied, "You don't always have to donate money to a shelter. You can donate your time." Stella pointed out that, "So much of it is about being recognized as a human being" and refers to socially engaged art from the Los Angeles Poverty Department, an activist collective comprised of homeless people from Skid Row that was discussed on an earlier date in the internship. Lauren replied, "They're not helpless, they just want to be treated like regular people." They then discussed how they could enlarge these images and put them in public spaces like bus stops and that it could function as "street art."

Presenting Activist Art

After completing their activist artworks, the interns presented them to the group. Even in helping one another present their activist works, the interns were saying something about who they were and who they wanted to be. For their activist art project, James, Clara, and Cecilia created a film entitled *Rainy Days: An LGBT Short Film*. Clara described the film as addressing "LGBT community" and James said that the purpose of the film was "to show what the LGBT

[6] "The East," also known as "New Orleans East," is a neighborhood that was heavily impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

community goes through." The film is meditative and shows a range of scenes as the song, "Youth" by Daughter plays in the background. The lyrics of the song are as follows:

> We are the reckless,
> We are the wild youth
> Chasing visions of our futures.
> One day we'll reveal the truth
> That one will die before he gets there.
>
> And if you're still bleeding, you're the lucky ones.
> 'Cause most of our feelings, they are dead, and they are gone.
> We're setting fire to our insides for fun.
> Collecting pictures from a flood that wrecked our home,
> It was a flood that wrecked this home.

The song lyrics were significant because they not only referenced the envisioning of future selves, but also a flood, symbolizing a subliminal reference to Katrina. The song is a representation of so many themes of the internship: youth, identity, Katrina. In one frame of the film, James holds an umbrella while projections of the rainbow pride flag are displayed over a crowd of protestors (see Figure 6.11). In another, an umbrella is displayed over a series of newspaper headlines about the AIDS crisis using negative terminology like, "Terror of the Plague" (see Figure 6.12). Cecilia explained that "the symbolism of the umbrella is shelter." Other frames displayed inspirational quotes about LGBTQ+ rights across the screen (see Figure 6.13).

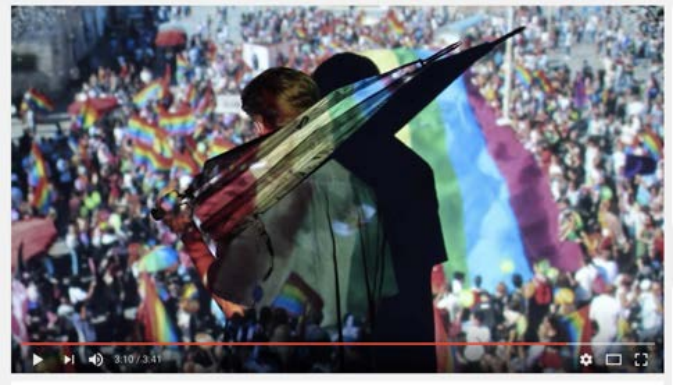

Figure 6.11. Screen shot from *Rainy Days* film.

Figure 6.12. Screen shot from Rainy Days film.

Figure 6.13. Screen shot from *Rainy Days* film.

Cecilia explains that, "People try to erase what LGBTQ+ people go through. They just say, 'Get over it.'" The presentation of this film publicly was especially significant for Cecilia. She said, "I don't know if I'd want to show this to my parents." She had been coping with hiding her identification with the LGBTQ+ community with from her parents because of their anti-LGBTQ+ behaviors and comments. She said, "My dad made this weird comment about my cousin about the way she dressed. He said, 'She's probably going to grow up to be a dyke.' Then, "I said, 'what if that is me?'" She said that her dad said to her, "'You're not going to go off to college and be wild and become a lesbian and get pink hair and more piercings.'" She explained: "This is outside of my comfort zone because my family doesn't know that side of me.

Only my friends, about 10 people. Now, about 25. I don't like labels, but I'm attracted to both." She continues on to say, "This is the first time I'm talking about this. You're all accepting. Some of you are queer."

After the activist project presentations concluded, Stella debriefed the interns on the process. She asked, "Final thoughts about this experience in general?" James said, "I am pleasantly surprised. Going into this, I thought it would be very school project-y." He added, "I learned so much." James said that he was interested in the topic selections of the other interns and "what makes them feel the urge to use art to make change." Cecilia agreed that they could "see what they're passionate about." Stella told the interns: "I was really impressed by what you guys came up with. The range of projects was really good." Most of the activist projects were about issues that were personally compelling to the interns.

Artworld Exploration: Gallery Walk

The interns participated in artworld exploration practices, the central one being a gallery walk field trip where they explored art galleries in the arts district. Their assignment for this gallery walk was to find artworks that represented their past, present, and future selves. This was an opportunity for the interns to explore the artworld and envision their place within it. For example, in describing the gallery walk field trip/during the poetry workshop/when teaching art lessons, I encountered all these at work: narratives about art/artists, artifacts associated with art/artists, and practices associated with art/artists.

Gallery Walk: Envisioning Past, Present, and Future Selves

As we gathered in the front foyer of the CAC, one of the camp assistants handed out

umbrellas to us because it was raining. But, the rain was not too heavy, and the interns proceeded to prepare for their walk. As we waited for everyone to gather together in the foyer, the interns stood in social clusters or alone: Lauren with Jasmine, James with Olivia and Clara, Joey with Alex, and Natalie alone. Stella prepared the interns for the gallery walk and created a series of handouts to guide their walk (see Figure 6.14). She told the interns to pay close attention to the artist statements that they saw displayed in the galleries. This was because on Thursday, they would be writing their own artist statements. One of their tasks for the day was to write three poems associated with three different artworks. In addition, they were considering their past self, present self, and future self and were supposed to look for artworks that represented each of these.

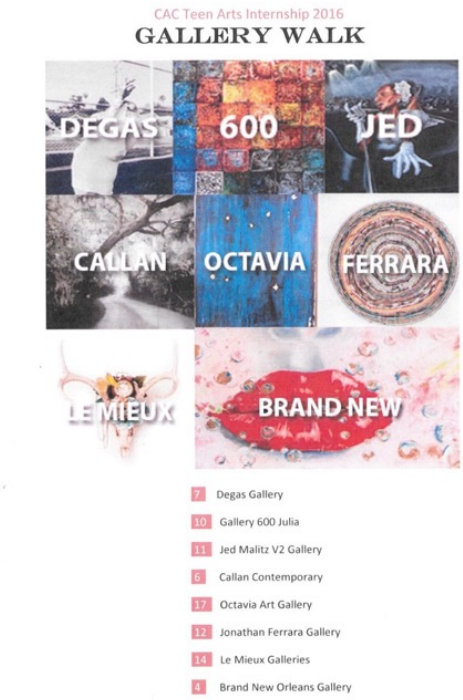

Figure 6.14. Gallery Walk handout.

Figure 6.15. Artwork at 600 Julia Gallery.

The first gallery that we attended was 600 Julia. It was populated with work from over 30 different Louisiana artists (see Figure 6.15). Much of the work was representational featuring street scenes, still lifes, or landscapes of Louisiana. The interns walked around the crowded space, taking occasional photographs of the art. As we left this gallery, we walked in the light rain with our umbrellas (see Figure 6.16). A few of the galleries that we had planned to visit were closed (Degas Gallery, Alex Beard Gallery). The Operations Manager for the camp who was along for the field trip, went around looking for an open gallery and returned to the group saying, "They kind of have their own hours."

We then found an open gallery, Callan Contemporary. In a side room of the gallery, we saw an artwork by José María Cundín, *El Sacamantecas (the Liposuctor)* that included some words in Spanish (see Figure 6.17). Nora said that her dad is fluent in Spanish and that he is from Nicaragua. Nora seemed really interested in this artwork and spent a long time looking at it and taking photographs. Cecilia said, "I'm Spanish, but I don't know Spanish" and talks about

how her mom speaks French. Lucy said that her dad speaks French and that she went through a French immersion program at her elementary school. The interns took lots of photographs at this gallery. Alex saw a sculptural metal coat and said, "Such a cool coat. I want a coat like that." The artwork, by Key-Sook Geum, is called *Philosopher's Coat* (see Figure 6.18).

Figure 6.16. Gallery Walk through the Arts District of New Orleans.

Figure 6.17. José María Cundín, *El Sacamantecas (the Liposuctor).*

Figure 6.18. Key-Sook Geum, *Philosopher's Coat*.

During the gallery walk, the interns were instructed to locate artworks that represented their past, present, and future selves. These artworks became mediating devices for identity. As they walked, Olivia said to James about an artwork (see Figure 6.19), saying, "That's you now. Take a picture and present that." James said, "That's me now." James mentioned feeling "clumsy" in the gallery and being afraid to bump into something or to point at something and get too close by accident. He said that the gallery made him "nervous."

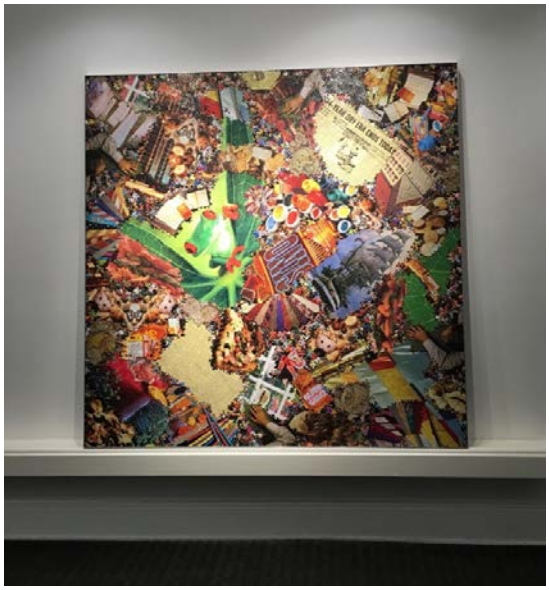

Figure 6.19. An artwork representing James in the present.

Joey's connection with an artwork with the caption, "Gay is Not Enough" is another case example of an identity-mediating artwork (see Figure 6.20). In Arthur Roger Gallery, Joey noticed an artwork with the caption, "Gay is Not Enough." When Joey saw this artwork, he immediately became excited and called over some of his friends to see it. Joey said, "You are inadequate" (jokingly to James, who identifies as gay). Alex, Joey, James, and Olivia all gathered around. Joey asked, "Is it pro-gay?" Joey later used this artwork in his "past, present, and future self" collage (see Figure 6.21).

Figure 6.20. Gay is Not Enough artwork at Arthur Roger Gallery.

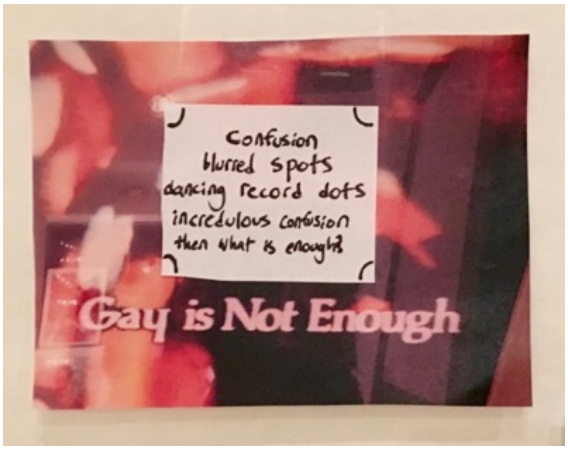

Figure 6.21. Joey's "past, present, and future self" collage.

In one of the art galleries, Tristan and Lauren noticed an artwork by Mona Monalisa that shared a resemblance to the activist work they created (see Figure 6.22). Tristan said, "This kind

of looks like what we made, Lauren." It was true, this work evokes a ghostliness similar to Lauren and Tristan's activist artwork on the topic of homelessness. By seeing an artwork in a gallery that was similar to their own, the young artists likely felt a sense of excitement in identifying with this work.

Figure 6.22. Artwork by Mona Monalisa resembling Lauren and Tristan's activist artwork.

As we entered Le Mieux Gallery, Lucy saw a mobile and said, that she wanted tattoos like this. Stella tells Lucy: "This can be your past, present, and future self" (see Figure 6.23). Within the space of the art gallery, Stella used this artifact to ascribe identity characteristics to Lucy. Because of Stella's role as leader of the internship program, her assertion that this work representative of Lucy was likely very influential to Lucy. She took photographs of the mobile and talked with Stella about what they different parts of it might mean: coffee represented the future and adulthood and milk represented the future and old age as well as the childhood and the past.

Figure 6.23. Lucy's "past, present, and future self" reflected in art.

We then walked back outside. Nora and Jasmine discussed artworks that they liked as they walked along the street. We were now walking back to the CAC. The sun was coming back out and it was very humid. It stopped raining and now I was sweating. Once we got back to the CAC, Lucy and a few others went to the café. Stella said that they weren't supposed to go there. When they returned to the group who has gathered in the entry foyer of the CAC, everyone boos at them. James said, "As she sips her tea, literally." This was the first time that I observed Stella enforce discipline of the teens for not following rules during the program. We walked back up to the classroom and discussed the gallery walk. Stella asked if everyone took pictures. She also asked them to text or email one of their pictures, one of their poems, and their three pictures that represented their past, present, and future self. After the gallery walk, the interns were expected to select images and write artist statements representative of their past, present, and future selves.

Artist Mentoring

Being mentored and inspired by other artists is an important aspect of artist identity formation. Many of the interns expressed being inspired by famous artists—indeed several of the interns described their admiration of both Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring. Still others were inspired by performing artists—Cecilia had a strong admiration for Demi Lovato and Tristan looked up to Kanye West and Tyler, the Creator. In both of these examples, the artists were admired for being boldly outspoken. Of Tyler, the Creator, Tristan noted that the message of this music is: "Be yourself. Do what you want to do. Don't listen to what other people say." In addition, many of the interns recognized that people at the CAC, especially Stella, the education coordinator, actress, and slam poet, had been influential. Lucy stated that

> Stella has been a pretty key mentor in the arts for me since I started doing stuff at the CAC because I think she really opened my eyes to this world of art that I had never really seen before, this world of art that's not just paintings hung in galleries: it's zines, it's open stage nights where teenagers can come read their writing, and it's a more publicly available world of art.

James, who, like Lucy had been involved in the teen arts programming for multiple years and had developed strong bonds with Stella and others at the CAC, said:

> Almost everyone here has been an unbelievable mentor for me and so caring and kind. They're so humble as well, I noticed. A lot of times, I'll meet someone here and we'll become close friends and we'll be exchanging stories and they'll be like, "Oh, yeah. That time when I was on Broadway." It's like, "Wow. I didn't know that." I've never had a mentor that's this involved in the art world.

Some of the interns (Lily, Alyssa, Olivia, and Nora) were invited to assist the artist Chung-Fan Chang with a drawing installation of Kites" (see Figure 6.24) for a show opening on White Linen Night. This process involved drawing meticulous scribbles in colored pens onto a wall under the mentorship of Chung-Fan Chang. Of this experience, Lily said, "that's just a really cool experience to be able to work on a real installation in the Contemporary Arts Center."

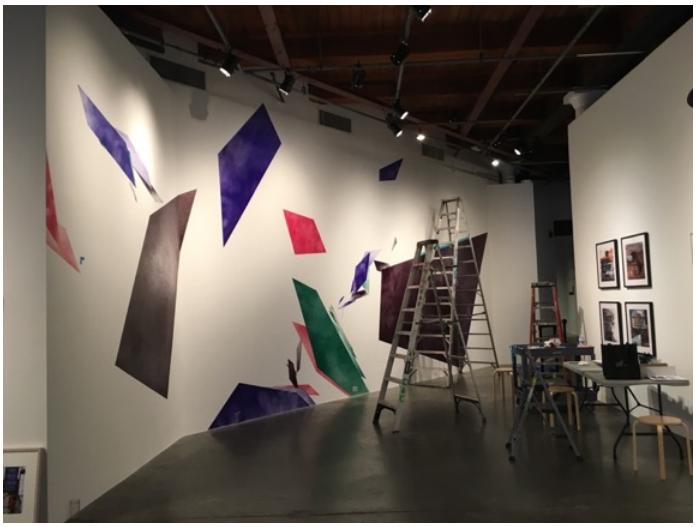

Figure 6.24. Chung-Fan Chang, *Kites*: installation in progress at the CAC.

One of the key activities of the internship involved a mentoring opportunity with two local slam poet-artists: Beck Cooper, a White female who runs an oral history archive in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, known for her poem "Too Big" and Kataalyst Alcindor, a Black male who was part of the 2012 National Poetry Slam team from New Orleans, of which Stella was a part, known for his poem, "Greater than Hurricanes." Both Beck and Kataalyst use their poetry as a mode for activism.

For the first activity of the workshop, Beck asked the interns to write a list of 40 words to describe themselves. The students wrote quietly for a few minutes. Then, the next instruction was to cross out 20 words. Next, Beck led the interns in making found poems, similar to erasure poems, another form of response poems. Beck provided some controversial texts such as Donald Trump's speech at the Republican National Convention (RNC), Kanye West's rant about Taylor Swift at the MTV Video Music Awards, and song lyrics including Iggy Azalea's "Fancy," "Accidental Racist," "Blurred Lines," and "Redneck Crazy" (see Figure 6.25). The interns were not limited to these texts, but these were some that Beck provided for them to work with. Beck emphasized that using these poems was a way of doing activism in that it is a "reclamation" of

hurtful words. Tristan selects a Kanye West "rant." Several people opt to revise Donald Trump's RNC speech. Zoe changed it to be about Hillary Clinton instead. Stella removed nearly all the words from speech to say: "It's rigged, it's rigged, it's rigged." Nora revised the speech by mashing it up with a New Yorker article and re-envisioned it to be positive about immigrants rather than negative. One of the source text options was the song, "Accidental Racist," a collaboration between country music artist Brad Paisley and rap music artist LL Cool J. Lauren and Jasmine both select "Accidental Racist" and decide to work together. One of the lines to the song is, "I'm just a White man comin' to you from the Southland…. I'm proud of where I'm from, but not everything we've done." "Jasmine and Lauren revised this line as follows: "I'm a Black girl from the South. I'm proud of where I'm from, but not everything it's done."

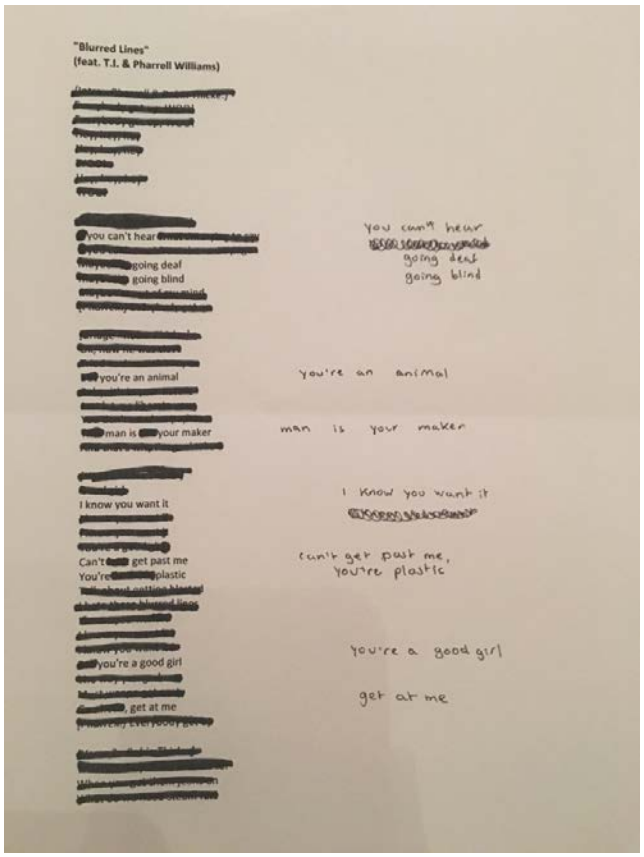

Figure 6.25. Erasure poem.

The next workshop was led by the poet Kataalyst Alcindor. Kataalyst introduced himself by saying, "I do poetry. That's about it." He described touring and teaching in different contexts: in prisons as well as in colleges. He pointed to the poster on the wall where the interns had listed the activist issues of interest to them and said that he would be "teaching from this chart that you guys created on activist issues." Kataalyst noted that "2016 and beyond 2016, but this year has been particularly heinous to people of the African diaspora." He listed some of his goals of the workshop: "to help you become good allies" and "to be brave people" and "to stand up to discrimination." He then asked the interns to "pick a subject from the chart." The interns got up out of their seats to look at the list of activist issues on the chart that they have created. Cecilia: "mental illness." James: "discrimination of the LGBTQ+ community." Clara: "gender bias." Rose: "beauty standards." Alex: "colorblindness." Joey: "gun control." Lauren: "colorism." Jasmine: "stereotypes." Nora: "poverty."

Next, Kataalyst led the interns in a series of exercises where they reduced the words of their poems. As they were writing, Kataalyst played music on his phone: jazzy music, a brass band with a contemporary twist. I think this was conducive to energetic, quick writing on an urgent social issue. He encouraged the teens to "be brave and be open and honest about things you are struggling with." He said, "this is the beginning of something you can do for the rest of your lives. Own yourself." Several of the interns wrote about their experiences with feeling oppressed by religious institutions, especially salient because many of them attend Catholic schools. Olivia discussed how she has attended Catholic schools, but that she is not religious. Zoe adds, "In church, I was told, I needed to change my sexuality." In Olivia's poem, she described "hateful religion" and used the words: "you're going to hell" and "repent, repent" that she has heard from religious people in her experiences going to Catholic school. Because many

of the interns have attended Catholic schools and/or grew up in the Catholic church, they had a shared experience with this.

Kataalyst said, “You guys are very brave.” James pointed out that in this group, “even when people are arguing, they are still respectful.” Kataalyst said, “You guys are the activists. You guys are the artists.” Here, he was clearly identifying them as both activists and artists and indicating the connectedness between these identifications. Kataalyst concluded with some words of encouragement for the interns and highlights the importance of artists. He began by saying, “Imagine a supermarket. The people that created the labels are artists or graphic designers. You guys are the artists that give people the idea or eat or drink a certain thing.” He also emphasized the importance of artists in creating social change, saying: “you are the agents of change.”

In summation, the interns engaged in a discussion about their comfort levels in sharing poetry with others in this setting. Rose said, “I liked today” even though she admitted that she was previously not comfortable with writing poetry. Lucy said, “I’m really impressed that y’all were able to talk about deep stuff so openly.” Tristan said that recently he had “become more introverted. The past few days, I’ve been hanging out with some of my good friends. It’s great to be able to do poetry workshops and get my ideas out.” James said, “It’s really amazing how everyone shared how they felt and also validated everyone else’s feelings.” Zoe said that what she likes about the internship so far is “how easy it is to talk about things here.” She said, “It took me a year to tell my best friend that I was bisexual,” but that here she felt comfortable sharing this information right away. Rose described “how accepting everyone is” and that there is “no judgement” in this space. Alex said: “This place is so accepting. The day before yesterday was my first day here. I already feel like I know everyone really well. It’s usually hard for me to

tell people what I've gone through." He continued on to say: "It's really exciting because I feel like I can finally open up about things people can understand." Others also felt that the workshop empowered them to feel comfortable with expressing difficult issues. Of the poetry workshop, in our interview, Tristan said, "That was the first time everybody really opened up. That was great."

Art Teaching

There were some indications that the interns were less than enthusiastic about the prospect of becoming art educators. James, in particular, demonstrated this dismissive perspective on the prospect of being an art teacher. He talked fondly of his high school art teacher but seemed to think that because she "always wanted to be an art teacher" that her mentorship was not sufficient for preparing him for a career as a professional artist. By contrast, James felt that he did encounter exceptional mentorship towards becoming an artist through his involvement at the CAC. This idealism about the artist who is not a teacher and the devaluation of a career as an art educator was a common perspective among the interns. Nonetheless, there were elements of the internship that were aligned with preparing them to teach art. However, they did engage in a few activities that were directly related to teaching art. The most significant of these was their daily responsibilities with the CAC summer camp where they worked as assistants, helping the counselors in different arts disciplines each afternoon. The other was an assignment as part of the internship to develop and enact an art lesson that they taught to their internship peers.

I asked some of the interns about their experiences with the camp and, for the most part, they liked working with the camp, but they were not necessarily interested in becoming arts

educators. For example, although Tristan enjoyed working with the young children in the summer camp at the CAC, he did not want to be a teacher. He said: "Working with the kids in the afternoon is pretty fun. That's when I'm able to become goofy because I still act like I'm eight years old, honestly." Further describing teaching, Tristan said:

> I know I couldn't do that. I like to work with kids only because I am a kid. I like to have fun with them. I don't like to have to teach. In the classes, I forget that I am older than all of them and I have to help them out. They had to tell me a couple times, "Tristan, calm down, you're not with them." Last week, the kids were playing musical chairs and I got so excited when they were putting the chairs together. Like, "Whoa, Can I come play?"

In addition to working with the camp, the interns were also expected to plan and teach an art lesson to their peers, priming them for the role of arts educator.

One of the last activities of the internship was the development of an art lesson plan and the teaching of this art lesson to peers in the internship program. Although none of the interns explicitly expressed a desire to become an art teacher, there were several practices of the internship geared towards the development of art educators. Teaching a lesson to peers was an opportunity for the interns to act as art educators and to develop skills and confidence in their teaching abilities, even if that was not their primary interest.

Each of the interns developed their own art lesson plan and then they taught their lesson to the other interns. Joey, who had repeatedly expressed his love for cats, taught a creative drawing activity where the interns are instructed to transform pictures of inanimate objects (a table, a bell, rocks, and a vase) into cats. In response, Cecilia created a drawing of "Duane 'The Rock' Kitty," turning rocks into a cat (see Figure 6.26).

Figure 6.26. Cat drawing by Cecilia from Joey's art lesson.

James conducted an art lesson involving tarot cards (see Figure 6.27). Tarot cards are fortune telling cards with pictures on them, "each card has art on it," James said. He told the interns: "Decide what future you want to have or the future that you want someone else in the room to have." The interns used black illustration pens and watercolor washes to create their cards. As they paint, they dip their brushes into Mardi Gras cups full of water as they paint. During the lunch break today, James conducted tarot card readings while the interns ate their lunches.

Figure 6.27. Tarot cards from James's art lesson.

Alex taught a lesson on how to make origami cranes (see Figure 6.28). He said that "if you make 1000 origami cranes, you will get your heart's desire." Although the activity was challenging for the interns, admirably, Alex was not flustered in teaching this and I made sure to compliment his composure. After teaching the lesson, Stella asked Alex, "What did you learn from this?" Alex said, "teaching people is hard."

Figure 6.28. Paper cranes from Alex's art lesson.

Art- and Self-Presentation

The interns engaged in a number of art-presentation practices such as displaying art publicly in various venues including physical locations such as the CAC and digital locations such as on social media. They also crafted self-presentation practices around artistic personas in other visual ways such as through fashion, a topic that they frequently discussed during the internship and that manifested in their clothing selections. Hence, visual representations of art and selves in social settings is a key part of how young people present themselves as artists to others, how they get their art into the figured world of the arts, and how they connect with other artists.

Physical Presentations of Art

On the wall, there were collages of the artworks that the interns selected to represent their past, present, and future selves. These were based on artworks that they photographed during the gallery walk. The interns wrote artist statements to correspond to their activist artworks and their past, present, future collages. Their artwork and artist statements are representations of their past, present, and future selves. In her past, present, future collage, Zoe created a collage of artworks that she photographed during the gallery walk (see Figure 6.26). Zoe also wrote the following artist statement to accompany her collage, entitled, *Defining the Moment*:

> We all at some point see bits and pieces of ourselves in the world. Whether it's in art, other people, or the state of our lives, our past, present, and future follow us everywhere we go. In my piece, I highlight three works of art that represent these stages. By using these pictures and the descriptions that follow, I remind myself, and others, that it is okay to embrace our past, accept our present, and dream of our future.

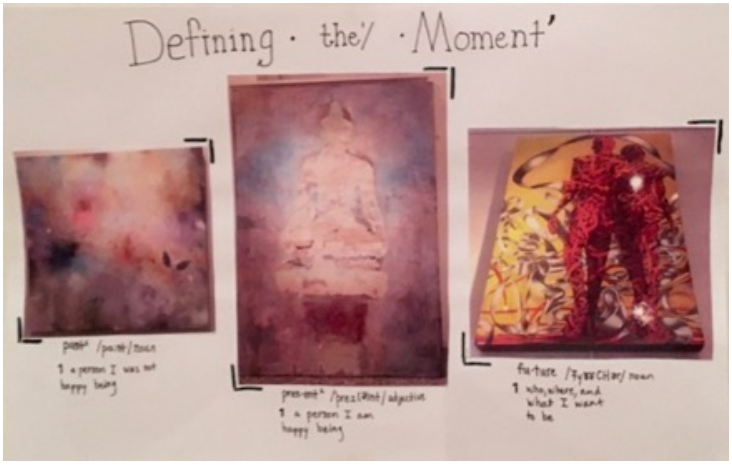

Figure 6.29. Defining the Moment: Zoe's "past, present, and future self" collage.

On the last day of the internship, the "past, present, and future self" collages, artist statements, and other art and writing that the interns created were displayed in the main foyer of the CAC during a cumulative celebration event (see Figure 6.30).

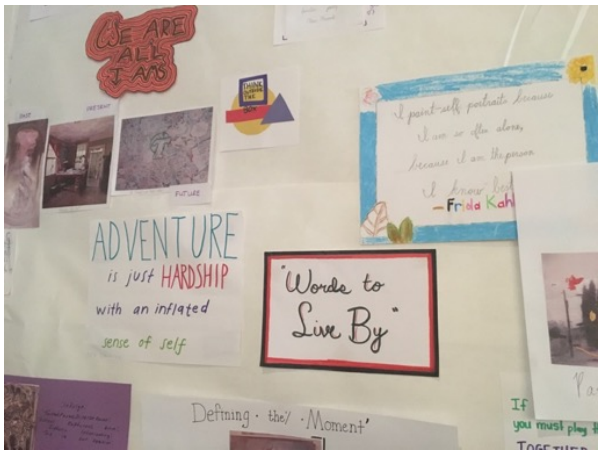

Figure 6.30. CAC final day wall display.

Digital Presentations of Art

Contemporary identities are often constructed, in part, through social media and art education has a role to play in this construction. Sweeny (2009) describes the development of networked identities, stating:

> Identity is found in the relationships between the sites of social media, as well as how they interconnect, or fail to do so, with lived experience. Moreover, the networked identity of the user is intertwined with the identity of his or her friends, co-workers, family and perhaps total strangers. (p. 209)

Social media acts as a figured world while engaging in sharing and consuming art through social media is a social practice. The interns used social media to share their artwork with others, to learn about and follow other artists, and in some cases, to do activist work with their art through social media. The young people used various social media platforms including Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and others. Most of the interns engaged in the use of social media as a means of sharing their work with others and gaining feedback on their work. A social media post is an artifact that perpetuates narratives, that creates new narratives, and that responds to existing narratives. It is inherently a social practice and a significant component of

artist identity work in the contemporary world. Engaging in the presentation of oneself as an artist on social media has become a key means of cementing one's artist identity.

Many of the interns recognized the potential for social media to function as a forum for art activism. For example, while Jasmine spoke of presenting her work through venues such as her school, NOCCA, the CAC Teen Arts Exhibition, her church, and other venues, like many of the other interns, she also displays her work through social media. Jasmine uses online platforms such as Instagram to share her art and to comment on current issues around social justice. Rose, who had also begun to use social media to engage in art activism said, "The whole point of art as activism isn't just to keep it to yourself. It's to share it with other people and get people's opinions and try and change opinions of others who are somewhat ignorant about the topic."

Alex noted that social media offers a way to obtain recognition and validation of the self as artist as a form of social exchange with other artists saying,

> I share some of my art on social media. It's just putting it out there. Like anyone, I like people to tell me that they like my art. Putting it out there is kind of like, "Please, tell me it looks good," even though I know it looks good and I know it helped me through something. So, that's what counts. Specific praise is nice, and I like putting my art out there so that people can see if they connect with my art and I can try and connect with their art. I've had people who follow me on Instagram and I go look at their page and I'm like, "Hey, your art's cool, too." I feel inspired by their art.

Lily also discussed how she was inspired by artists who are not necessarily well-known, but who present their work through social media, saying: "Probably my biggest inspirations are just small artists that I find on social media. It's a realistic approach now that these small artists who would go otherwise unrecognized can really get out there and put their stuff out."

When asked about her favorite artists, Rose struggled to name any. I then asked, "Do you follow artists on social media?" Rose replied: "See, I do, but a lot of them are like… Here's the thing, I follow a lot of artists that are my age." Intrigued, I encouraged her to say more about

this. Rose then described the photography of a friend of hers. Rose then recalled a photographer whose work she admired—Tyler Shields. Hence, it turned out that Rose did know of some photographers and followed some photographers on social media, but because they were not so-called "fine art" photographers, she did not feel that they fit into a category of artists that should be revered.

Cecilia, in particular, has a large number of social media followers, many of them that she connected to through being a fan of the performer Demi Lovato. Cecilia talked about using social media to raise "social awareness," as "a way of getting my art out." She added, "The reason I'm so open to meeting people online is because when they have similar interests as you, especially music, there's no holding back how you act, and you can totally feel yourself around them," acknowledging the role that social media plays in building communities with shared interests, while also furthering one's career and identity as a member of the figured world of "the arts." Tristan also felt motivated to use social media as a method for promoting and branding his work: "With all the social media and stuff, it's easy to get your name out there. I'm thinking of starting my own brand. I'll just start creating and people will follow along."

Fashion

Fashion was important to many of the interns and they frequently engaged in discussions about their clothing. James was especially interested in fashion and frequently discussed it. Olivia, who considers herself a fashion designer and studies fashion design at an arts high school, was one of his key fashion discussants. Many of the fashion discussions occurred during transitional periods and was not an official part of the internship, but there were times when fashion weaved its way into the core activities of the internship, too. For example, for her

activist art project, Olivia created a dress that focused on resistance to rape culture. James became the model for this dress once it was complete.

One day, before the group meets officially, I saw them standing together downstairs and talking informally. James was wearing his crushed black velvet shirt with crystal fringe, Alex was wearing a long light brown leather maxi coat with black jeans, a black t-shirt, and black boots, and Olivia was wearing a yellow crushed velvet mini dress with spaghetti straps over a see-through white long-sleeved shirt, white patent leather strappy sandals. To Natalie, who was wearing a white sleeveless pointelle button-down shirt, blue jeans, and Keds, James said, "You didn't get the memo. It's velvet day." Clothes are important to this group of self-presentation, but also signify one's identity as belonging to a group of artistic peers who are expressive in their clothing, but who are also expected to dress in a certain way to fit into notions of how an artist "should" dress.

Right before we went on the gallery walk, as were walking towards the elevator, Joey asked: "James, where did you get that shirt?" James replied, "Rainbow."[7] Olivia said to Clara, "You're 'goth' today." During the gallery walk, I noted another discussion about fashion. While we were in the first gallery of our walk, Olivia started talking to Clara and James about how her mom told her she was "dressed slutty." Olivia was wearing a short denim skirt, a white see-through button-up long sleeve shirt over a black tank top, and Doc Martens with ties around her ankles. Continuing with their conversation from earlier about fashion, Clara said that her mom said she is "going 'goth.'" Clara said, "I'm not going 'goth.'" Clara was wearing a black dress with a ripped-style shirt and Converse One Star shoes that are white with colorful patterns in the stars. This group continues to talk about fashion. It was very quiet in the gallery except for their

[7] Rainbow is a women's clothing store.

discussion about clothes. At another point during the gallery walk, as the interns wander about Octavia Gallery, I heard James and Olivia talking about fashion again. James was describing someone wearing "pink sparkly shorts" and a "pink bandana." He said, "I wish I was that daring." Here, James connected artistic fashion choices with being unafraid to take risks with fashion expression.

The way the young artists presented themselves through fashion is another form of artist identity work. Several of the interns spent a lot of time discussing fashion and appearance during the internship. Many of these discussions of fashion happened during transitional periods such as riding the elevator, during break or lunch time, while walking between different places, or while waiting in the lobby. These informal transitional self-presentation discussions were ways for the interns to not only express themselves by wearing provocative fashion, but also for them to talk about their clothing—where they got it, what their parents thought of it, and how they expected to be perceived based upon their fashion choices.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I presented impressionist portraits/landscapes representing these key activities of artist identity formation as observed in my research. Observations of the intern-participants in this research revealed much about how artistic identity formation happens within social situations through an interplay of narratives, artifacts, activities, and interactions. Through the key activities of the internship: Artist Self-Reflection, Art Learning: Art as Activism, Making and Presenting (Activist) Art, Artworld Exploration: Gallery Walk, Artist Mentoring, Teaching Art, Art- and Self-Presentation, the young artists engaged in identity work. This network of activities mimicked some key aspects of participation in the artworld including art learning, art

creation, and art teaching. As the interns participated, they had many opportunities to establish their competence in these artworld activities, to try them out and determine whether or not they would seek further development of their skills in a particular area of the artworld.

CHAPTER 7

CONSEQUENCES OF ARTIST IDENTITY WORK: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Through an examination of personal narratives, contextual figured worlds, and activities within a teen arts internship program in New Orleans, I observed and analyzed some of the key practices of artist identity work and their personal and social consequences. Holland et al. (1998) contend that "the meaning that we make of ourselves is, in Bakhtin's terms, 'authoring the self'" (p. 173). This artist-self is not derived out of nothing, but, "the 'I' is more like Lévi-Strauss's (1966) *bricoleur*, who builds upon preexisting materials" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 170). Hence, as Holland et al. (1998) state:

> In such a diverse and contentious social world, the author, in everyday life as in artistic work, creates by orchestration, by arranging overheard elements, themes, and forms, not by some outpouring of an ineffable and central source. That is, the author works within, or at least against, a set of constraints that are also a set of possibilities for utterance. (p. 171)

This research addresses the "orchestration" of artist identities by youth involved in a teen arts internship at a contemporary arts center in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) offer a set of modes for identifying and presenting emergent themes from research data. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) suggest looking for "repetitive refrains" (p. 193), "resonant metaphors," (p. 198), "institutional and cultural rituals," (p. 201), and to engage in "triangulation" (p. 204), and to strive to identify "revealing patterns" (p. 209) in the research. I have used the tools of narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008) and situational analysis (Clarke 2005) to identify such emergent themes as they appeared throughout the data chapters in the dissertation.

In the preceding chapters, I presented (a) narratives through the portraits, (b) descriptions of contextual figured worlds through the perspectives of the interns as well as through my own,

and also (c) accounts of the artist identity work activities that occurred during the internship. In this chapter, I discuss four emergent themes from these different chapters that characterize the consequences of participants' artist identity work. The emergent themes I identified and that I utilize to conceptualize artist identity work in this chapter are: Deploying "Artist" Discourses; Narrativizing Past, Present and Future "Artist" Selves; Finding the Right Medium as Finding Self; and Anticipating Personal and Social Consequences.

Deploying "Artist" Discourses

Discourses conceptualizing "the artist" are influential in shaping artist identity formation in youth. Gaztambide-Fernández (2008) theorizes four ways in which the artist has been presented in society: artist as "civilizer" (p. 241), one who creates art for art's sake and contributes to the development of civilization; artist an "exalted creator" (p. 241), a creative genius set apart from the rest of society; artist as "border crosser," an activist who has the power to transform society through their work; and artist as "representator," one who represents everyday people through art. To interpret discourses such as these within relations of power, it is important to take a critical perspective because, as Gee (2011) states:

> language-in-use is always part and parcel of, and partially constitutive of, specific social practices, and that social practices always have implications for inherently political things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power. (p. 28)

As the young artists in this study told their stories and participated in discussions with others throughout the internship, they deployed common discourses about artists that placed them within the tradition of the life story narrative of the artist (Soussloff, 1997, 2006; Wittkower, & Wittkower, 1963). As Gaztambide-Fernández (2008) writes:

> Young artists' educational experiences shape how they construct their artistic identities and understand their role in society. In turn, these experiences are shaped by different

> views of the artist that are prevalent in the cultural and social context in which that education occurs (p. 234).

These discursive conceptualizations of what an artist is permeated discussions and were fully integrated into how the interns viewed themselves in relation to an artist identity. The interns' repeated conceptualizations about artists throughout the study included: the artist as talented, the artist as creative, the artist as passionate, the artist as emotional, and the artist as activist. In narrative depictions of artistic motivation, the interns often depicted the expression of oneself through artistic means as emanating from sources beyond the conscious control of the artist. For example, artistic inclinations were viewed as stemming from talent, passion, emotions, and/or inherited through familial ties, as when Alex simply stated of art: "it's my passion." This and other depictions of what artists do and what motivates what they do deployed mythologies that characterized artistic inclinations and activities as beyond the control of the artist.

As the young artists deployed these discourses of "the artist," they were not only trying to describe what an artist "is," but also negotiating their own identities as artists. Most of the interns named themselves as artists directly. Others were more ambivalent about whether they felt that they could claim an artist identity, questioning whether they felt that they existed within the realm of "artist." This analysis is focused on the way the interns talked about themselves as artists and the influences on their development as artists. The interns represented various conceptualizations of what an artist is and does and considering how they connect with these ideas—how they consider whether or not they are artists.

Part of embracing an artist identity is the possibility of viewing oneself in the image of the artist as talented, creative, passionate, emotional, activist. The interns used terms like "artsy," "creative," and "artistic" to describe themselves and to align their identities with the arts.

Lily recalled being recognized by teachers as "artsy," saying: "Growing up, just in my normal classes, I was always known as the artsy one. So, if my teachers wanted to make banners and they needed some help, they would always ask me, and I really liked that." Indeed, in Lily's account, she stated that this recognition and identification as "creative" and "artsy" had a significant influence on her own adoption of an artist identity: "Like I said, when I was younger, I was recognized as the creative or the artsy one. So, that was something that made me myself, and I just carried that on." Rose used the term "artsy" to define herself and to contrast her identity as an artist with that of her sister, saying: "She's not artsy. She's not the artsy brain like I am. She's scientific and factual." Here, Rose implies that artists or those who are "artsy" are not "scientific and factual" and describes herself in these terms.

Often, the interns situated their artist self as a radical self. Part of the reasoning behind this lies in the discourses around artists as outside of the mainstream. This situating of oneself outside of norms seemed to facilitate an allegiance with activism or for using art to stand against oppression. Here, they situate themselves as a "'certain kind of person'" (Gee, 2000-01, p. 25), an artist, through their experiences and affinities with the arts. The irony of the individual model of the artist is that you need to be like other artists in order to be considered an artist. Many expressed a confident audacity in calling themselves artists. Jasmine felt confident in calling herself an artist, saying: "I consider myself an artist because I make art to teach people about different things and hopefully connect with them and understand how I feel and hopefully broaden other people's perspective on the world and help them realize it's not just them. There's other people." For the most part, the interns in this program did not seem to feel particularly insecure in calling themselves artists, although there were some exceptions.

"Belonging" in the Arts

Within the internship, how one engaged in activities could indicate whether or not one "belonged" within the art community—whether or not one was an artist. To be an artist, one is expected to engage in very specific activities such as drawing, dressing like an artist, and/or espousing your knowledge about art and artists. Part of this seeking to "fit in" to the "artworld" often involves the development of a personae as an "elite misfit." In the interns' narratives, there seemed to be a dualistic state of feeling distinct and rarified as an artist, but also feeling as if they did not fit into the broad norms of society. Although many of the interns identified themselves as outside of the norm or misfits of some sort, it is important to note that their elite status affords them the "freedom" to act upon their "misfit status" and to feel supported in expressing their differences from "norms." I think that this plays into the notion that artists have difficulty fitting into society. However, the freedom to reject social norms is often afforded by having socioeconomic security. So, if one is White, highly educated, and economically secure, one can more readily afford to reject social norms and experiment with one's identity.

Several of the interns related discourses about artists as "depressed." For example, when I asked Cecilia about whether she had experienced any roadblocks in developing herself in the arts, she replied: **"**I've always heard this—that artists are the people who go through the most. They're never the happiest people" and that artists are "the most depressed emotionally." Within this statement, Cecilia depicts societal impressions about artists as "depressed" and cosigns this view based upon her own experiences and motivations for making art. She confirms the idea that "emotional distress" is a strong motivator for artmaking based upon her own experiences. In addition, she reaffirms the notion of artistic inclinations as inherited by mentioning that her mother is also an artist, implying that this has had an influence upon her own artistic tendencies.

When asked about early experiences in being recognized as an artist, Tristan described feeling as if he did not want to conform to the regulations of school and connected this with being an artist:

> I had a lot of trouble concentrating in class and stuff. I never really wanted to do my work. I wanted to look out the window and go have fun and play and stuff like that. I feel like most, a lot, of artists are like that. They don't feel like conforming to everyday tasks.

While in many cases, conceptualizations of the artist were constitutive of the formation of artist identities within the interns, they also influence the exclusion of individuals from accessing these artist identities (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008). Postmodernism has in some ways democratized access to the ability to claim an artist identity and to expand the notion of what an artist is or does, but the modernist ideas about artists as White males possessing mythic genius persist. Charland (2010) discusses how such narrative conceptualizations of the artist are often deterrents to some young people who might otherwise be interested in the practices of being an artist. Charland's study on African American youth and foreclosure of artist identities demonstrates this. As the young artists talked to me in our interviews, they constructed and presented narratives of themselves as artists. Through this narrative identity work, they negotiated the ways they do and do not "fit in" to the figured world of "art" and how they do and do not exhibit characteristics of an "artist" in the way that art and artists are sociocultural constructed.

The notion that artistic talent is inherent and/or inherited was also frequently expressed throughout the internship. For example, James said, **"**My mom would always say, "it's in our blood" or something like that. "It must have been genetic" because all three of us were pretty decent at visual arts for never having classes." In addition, Tristan deployed the discourse of artistic ability as an inherited trait and illustrated the notion of artistic inclinations being inherited, even embedded within his family's last name. He stated: "My dad, he does ornamental

ironwork and he makes fences and stuff for people. Also, we went to a family reunion and we found out that our last name means "skilled with your hands." Once I found that out, I was like, "Hey, this is crazy that I do art." Although she did emphasize the ways in which her mother, an artist and art teacher, facilitated her development in the arts, Cecilia offered a counterpoint to this idea of being an artist as inherited. She noted that people would often comment that she was "born" with a "gene" for artistic talent, but that she said that "it has to do with practice and how much effort you put into it." Although Cecilia dismissed the idea that her artistic abilities were biologically inherited, it is relevant to note that you can inherit things that are not necessarily genetic (money for example). Although, she denies the biological inheritance of an artist identity, she does emphasize the role of familial influence.

Several of the interns invoked the "starving artist" trope directly and indirectly. They indicated a willingness to sacrifice money and stability to be able to be an artist. For example, James stated: "I know deep down inside that I would rather be on the streets doing what I love than be in a big, nice house doing something that I hate every day." Cecilia also stressed the importance for her to be able to live an artist's life: "I'd rather be doing something I like and start out small and not being paid a lot than doing something I hate and get a lot of money. I want to be enjoying what I do. I don't want to be forced to do something just because it gets me money." The artist is viewed as one willing to do anything for their art and to live apart of the rest of society.

"Good Artist"/ "Bad Artist"

Both "good" and "bad" designations of being an artist were based upon assessments by others as to what constitutes an artist and what makes one a "good artist" versus a "bad artist."

Several of the interns described this recognition of their artistic ability and/or artistic production as central to their burgeoning identities as artists. In addition, through the questions that I asked within the context of the research study and the internship, the interns often sought to demonstrate their art knowledge as a way of establishing competence in the discipline of art and situating themselves as artists. I heard the refrain "I'm a bad artist" from a few different interns: Rose in the context of struggling to name a favorite artist and Natalie and Joey in describing their drawing skills as "bad." Just as there were interns who described themselves as "bad artists," others described themselves as being recognized by others as "good artists." Indeed, it seems that a key part of internalizing that one is an artist is being recognized by others as "good at art," "artsy," "creative," or some variation of these.

I asked Rose about some of her favorite artists and she replied: "See, I'm a bad artist. I don't really have…" Since I knew that Rose was interested in film and photography, I asked if she had some favorite photographers or filmmakers. As she still struggled to name anyone, I assured Rose that it was fine that she could not think of a favorite artist and she again repeated: "I just feel like a bad artist." Again, I tried to be reassuring, telling her that as she takes more classes in photography, she will learn about more photographers. She then said, "I feel like I have some, but I don't know who they are." Eventually, she got out her phone and showed me and talked about the Instagram pages of some photographers that she admired. Holland et al. (1997) discuss how, as people become identified with roles within particular figured worlds, they go through various degrees of "competency, proficiency, and expertise" (p. 118) in the process. By my asking Rose about her favorite artists, I unintentionally asked her to demonstrate her competency in artworld discourses. While I did not intend for this question to position one as a "good" or "bad" artist, Rose seemed determined to come up with an answer that would

demonstrate her knowledge about artists, and thus position herself as one who "belongs" in the artworld and when she struggled to come up with a response, she seemed to feel as if not being able to name an artist meant that she was a "bad artist."

During our drawing exercise, Natalie drew a camera to represent an object of importance to her as an artist (see Figure 7.1). On the back of her drawing, Natalie wrote, "I'm sorry, I'm a wildly bad artist." To me, this was very interesting because it seemed to equate being a "good artist" with having realistic drawing skills, a common misconception by non-artists. I was surprised to hear this from someone who identified as an artist, albeit someone identified with theatre, film, and photography rather than drawing, but it demonstrated the pervasiveness of these ideas that a good artist is good at realistic drawing. In her self-representation (see Figure 7.2), Natalie also expressed a sense of insecurity in herself as an artist.

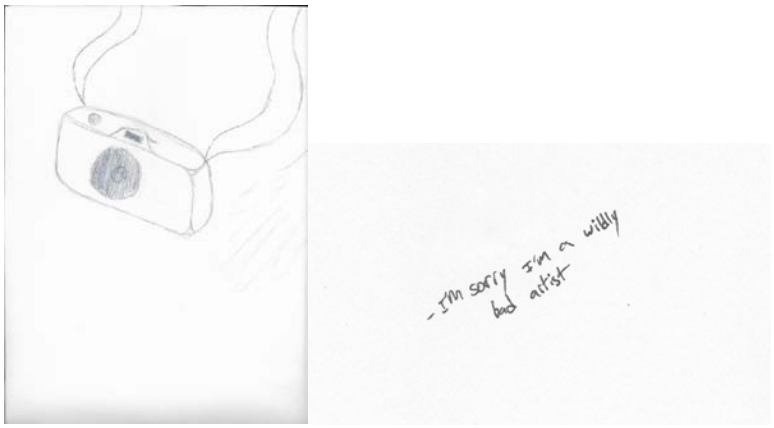

Figure 7.1. Natalie's object representation.

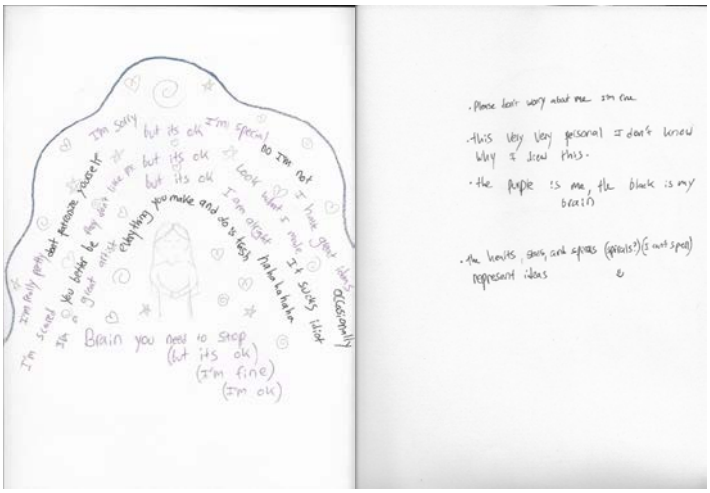

Figure 7.2. Natalie's self-representation drawing.

When asked about whether or not they consider themselves artists, several of the interns referenced being "good at drawing" as a marker of being an artist. For example, James said, "Both of my big sisters were really into visual arts at the time that I can first remember experiencing art and I wanted to be good at art just because they were. So, I would draw a lot." When I asked Joey if he considered himself an artist, even though he is primarily interested in musical theatre, he began his reply with a reference to drawing:

> Yeah, I do because I doodle. I do cartoon drawings and stuff like that. I love making things out of cardboard. But, more importantly, I like singing. I like acting, which is an art form and my voice can be art when singing and what I make can make other people happy.

Hence, even as the interns expressed expansive descriptions of what is considered "art," they still felt compelled to relate the identification of the self as artist with representational drawing.

Recognition as an Artist

Beyond simply being recognized as "good at art," some of the interns described how having others understand and appreciate their work was an important factor in their processes of

striving for recognition as an artist. For example, Alex discussed his friend who did a very detailed interpretation of his artwork. That Alex's friend was able to interpret his work with such detail and care shows that being understood through art was very important to Alex. Alex was able to express complex emotions about himself. That someone was able to so eloquently analyze and interpret the work shows that his work was impactful and successful. He was being recognized—not just as a "good artist," but as an artist who can communicate complex ideas about himself and be understood by others. By being understood in this way, Alex saw how his art could make an impact on others and how his art could also help him in his self-development.

Peers also play a significant role in the development of an artist identity. Lily described how her friends knew her as an artist and that because, as she said, "Artist is something I can identify as. So, my friends can kind of identify me as… They know I like to paint. So, I'm kind of like the artsy one." Further, Lily described this solidification of her artist identity based upon being recognized as an artist by others: "I guess that's kind of encouraging because it can be really confusing, who you see yourself as. So, to be able to choose, 'Oh, I'm an artist' kind of gives you something to identify as."

Many of the interns described being admired by others for their art or for being an artist. Tristan went on to describe how people had begun to admire him because of his identification as an artist, saying, "More recently, people have been telling me that they've been looking up to me" and "I feel as if I'm sort of like a localized celebrity." He attributed this admiration to the notion that artists are viewed as willing to express themselves freely without worrying too much about what other people think of them. Tristan seemed to enjoy being viewed as a celebrity, as someone who impacts people on a broader scale and he viewed art as a means of helping him to be seen as making an impact on the world-their being/self as having an impact on the world.

Alex described how social media

> I share some of my art on social media. It's just putting it out there. Like anyone, I like when people to tell me that they like my art. Putting it out there is kind of like, "Please, tell me it looks good," even though I know it looks good and I know it helped me through something. So, that's what counts. Specific praise is nice, and I like putting my art out there so that people can see if they connect with my art and I can try and connect with their art. I've had people who follow me on Instagram and I go look at their page and I'm like, "Hey, your art's cool, too." I feel inspired by their art."

After performing his play, I asked Joey about how he felt about the way the other interns reacted to it. Joey said:

> Just to have someone who says, 'I like what you do' is great because I know, at least with me, when I do any kind of art, I put a lot of myself into it. If I'm drawing, even if I'm drawing just something small in five seconds, if someone says, 'That's cool,' it's nice to hear because you did put thought into that and having someone recognize fuels you to do more of it because you realize that it's not bad. Someone likes it.

His response demonstrated the value of the response of others, how having one's work appreciated and valued increases one's confidence as an artist and one's likeliness to continue to pursue the arts even further.

Negotiating an Artist Identity

Despite their engaged participation in many artist-oriented practices, some of the interns, continued to question whether they could or would to claim an artist identity. Lucy expressed this uncertainty, stating that even though she said, "I'm a person who does art," she thinks "an artist is someone who really does dedicate their whole life to art." Like Lucy, Rose noted a hesitancy to call herself an artist yet: "I don't know if I consider myself an artist. I think I'm starting to." In saying this, she also expressed a fear that if she were to claim an artist identity that others would ask, "What gives you the right to be an artist?"

As a counter-perspective, some of the interns expressed a more democratized view of what an "artist" is and thus felt more confidence in claiming such an identity. When asked to elaborate on his definition of an artist, Tristan said that an artist is "someone who inspires people without actually trying to. You're just doing what you do and people like it just because it's you. It's just pure you." This more expansive view of "the artist" opens up the potential for anyone to participate in artistic practices and offers a view of art, creativity, and cultural production that is more fully integrated into everyday life. Tristan reiterated this view as follows: "Everyone is an artist in a way. If you're creating something and people are getting things out of it. If you're helping people out in a certain way, you're an artist. Plain and simple." However, while Tristan expressed these open-ended views of what an artist is, some of the others were less confident in their appraisals of their potential to claim an artist identity.

Narrativizing Past, Present, and Future "Artist" Selves

Becoming an artist is an identity formation process that moves across time and space/place. As one engages in authoring the self within a set of intersecting figured world contexts, one is informed by innumerable influences not limited by space and time, but influenced by a multiplicity of factors in past, present, and future. Indeed, as Holland et al. (1998) write: "This self-in-practice occupies the interface between intimate discourses, inner speaking, and bodily practices formed in the past and the discourses and practices to which people are exposed, willingly or not, in the present." (p. 32). The young artists conceptualized themselves in past, present, and future (as artists or not) through the practices of the internship. I structured my interviews with the participants so that they would tell a life history narrative even

if it was somewhat non-sequential. Hence, the narratives generally followed a chronological arc referencing past, present, and future selves.

Identity work practices happen when discourses are deployed within life story narratives of individuals. Indeed, biographies have long been influential in constructions of the histories and mythologies of individual artists (Soussloff, 1997; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008). Narratives often take a life history pattern: past, present, future self: telling a story of one's life and trajectory as an artist from a little kid finger painting on the floor to engaging in activities like this internship to imagining a future as a successful artist. To consider past, present, and future influences from contextual figured worlds is to step outside of the individual narratives and the social activities at work in the internship. This allows rumination on the geographical, political, and historical locations where artist identities are formed. This concept of "past, present, and future self" invokes time, but also place. It is a location of oneself in the trajectory of time and place within one's intersecting figured worlds, aligned with the concept of *currere*, where the sociohistorical contexts upon one's educational journey is critically acknowledged (Grumet, 1988; Pinar, 1975/2004; 2012; Pinar & Grumet, 1976).

In the case of this research study, New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina, the Contemporary Arts Center, the presidential election of 2016, the Black Lives Matter movement, and other factors all play a part in how the artist identities of the participants are forming. The discourses deployed within the personal narratives and within the activities of the internship mediated participants' membership and participation within specific figured worlds, especially "the artworld." The arts and arts education were often deemed a "safe space" by the young artists. Yet, also membership in other identity-related communities such as being from New Orleans, being Black, being trans, being Catholic, or being homeschooled. Deploying specific narratives

about what it means to be a member of a particular figured world could dictate whether one was a member or not.

The activities of the internship were infused with opportunities to consider one's past, present, and future selves as artists. Indeed, the gallery walk activity was accompanied by an assignment explicitly involving the creating of "past, present, and future self" collages. During the gallery walk, the interns were invited to take photographs of artworks that represented their past, present, and future selves. They were then asked to write a brief artist statement about their selections, to create a collage, and to present this work to others at the conclusion of the internship. This was the most deliberate and specific instance of an activity around conceptualizing past, present, and future selves as artists within the internship. Yet, there were others—the self-reflective journaling, the group discussions, and even my interviews with the participants encouraged thoughtfulness about how one had become an artist, who they were as artists, and their aspirations as artists. These internship activities functioned as spaces of self-authoring for the young artists.

Origin Stories

The interns often began their narratives around origin stories of their path to becoming artists. The origins of their motivation to become artists were often described through specific pivotal moments. Many described moments from memory when they came to a realization that they were "artists" or "good at art." Often, these realizations took place in the context of being recognized and encouraged by others, especially parents, teachers, and friends. For example, Alex noted that his first memory was that of finger painting on the floor. Tristan and Jasmine both recalled being recognized by teachers as having particular skills and talents in the visual arts

at a young age. Others, like Cecilia, noted the early memories of doing art with parents who were also artists and/or art educators. These recognitions and influences were invitations into the figured world of the arts. People are recruited into figured worlds—imagined and embodied spaces that Holland et al. (1998) call "as if" worlds. Part of this recruitment into the artworld begins with being recognized as an artist by others.

In their early life, many of the interns did not realize that becoming an artist was a viable career option. For example, James stated, "I never even thought of it as a job opportunity. I thought that being an artist was like people wanting to be a princess or 'I want to be an astronaut.'" Yet, upon further engagement with the figured world of the arts, the interns began to conceptualize the potential for further development as artists. Indeed, as Alex noted, "I would like to have a career as an artist. I think it's nice to prove to people who don't think it's a career that it can be. I'm all about proving people wrong. Just existing I've proved so many people wrong."

Being recognized and identified as an artist by others had a significant effect on the desire for further development in the arts. The impact of this recognition was especially influential when young people were recognized as "good" at art by others—teachers, parents, and peers. Tristan described a moment of such positive reinforcement from a teacher and how recognition from others motivated him to continue to develop himself as an artist: "That's what really started it all. When people actually started to notice it. It made me more confident and made me want to actually pursue it." Although she said, "My elementary school wasn't really into the arts, but I did draw on my own time with different books and use YouTube and things like that to help learn how to draw, but I didn't really get to drawing until NOCCA because I never had any formal arts training." Jasmine indicated the she was recognized for her drawing

skills at a young age: “I began in preschool, making art. I was about three when I started drawing. I got an award in preschool for drawing Power Puff Girls and things like that.” So, while she was largely self-taught in her younger years, there were signs that she was already receiving positive feedback and recognition from others with regards to her artistic inclinations.

Family Ties to the Arts

A few of the interns noted that their mothers were art teachers and/or artists and all described family members who were supportive of their interests in the arts. As Lackey and Murphy (2011) note, middle class parents often enroll their children in “out-of-school art education to foster socialization and cultural capital” (p. 3). There were some instances when an intern described artistic talent as an inherited trait. James is one example: “My mom would always say, ‘it’s in our blood’ or something like that. ‘It must have been genetic’ because all three of us were pretty decent at visual arts for never having classes.”

When I asked about her early life experiences with art, Cecilia acknowledged the influence of her mother, an artist and elementary school art teacher who attended NOCCA as a teen. Yet, she downplayed any indication that her artistic inclinations were somehow inherited. Cecilia said: “People think, “Oh, you’re born with your skill.” I don’t think that’s true. It’s honestly just, it has to do with practice and how much effort you put into it. Since I started at a young age, I think that’s why I have the skill that I have today. I used to have that mindset, “Oh, my mom’s an artist. Oh, I’m born with the gene.” I don’t think that’s true.”

However, even with extensive familial experience and support in her development in the arts, Cecilia’s family was not enthusiastic about her aspirations in the arts. Cecilia says: “My family would, say, “Oh, what are you doing for college?” “Art.” They’re like, “That’s not a real

major." I was surprised to hear this and asked her, "Even your mom who's the art teacher?" Cecilia affirmed this, telling me that several family members were saying things like, "That's not a real major." Cecilia said that she responded by telling her family: "What do you want me to do? You're telling me to go out and do something that I like and now you're telling me it's not real. It's not a real job."

One seemingly idiosyncratic point of interest about this group of young artists was that there were three female interns who had twin sisters (their twins did not participate in the internship): Nora, Cecilia, and Alyssa. It seemed that claiming an artist identity for these interns was a way of distinguishing themselves from their twins. Each of these interns used their identification with art to distinguish themselves from their twin sisters. Nora, in writing about herself as an artist, stated: "I have a twin sister who goes to the same school as me. She's in creative writing, so I guess I'm the art twin." Cecilia noted tensions within her family over her choice of a career in the arts in contrast to her twin sister who was planning to become a doctor. During our drawing session, Alyssa represented her experiences with her twin sister (see Figure 7.3), saying, "I'm a twin, as most of you know. Growing up, it was hard to be an individual because people clump you together when you are twins. So, I just drew a silhouette of two people and some of the things that make me 'me' and some of the things that make me separate from my twin." She wrote: "My love for history, nature, politics, literature, culture, food, and art make me a distinct and separate person outside of being a twin."

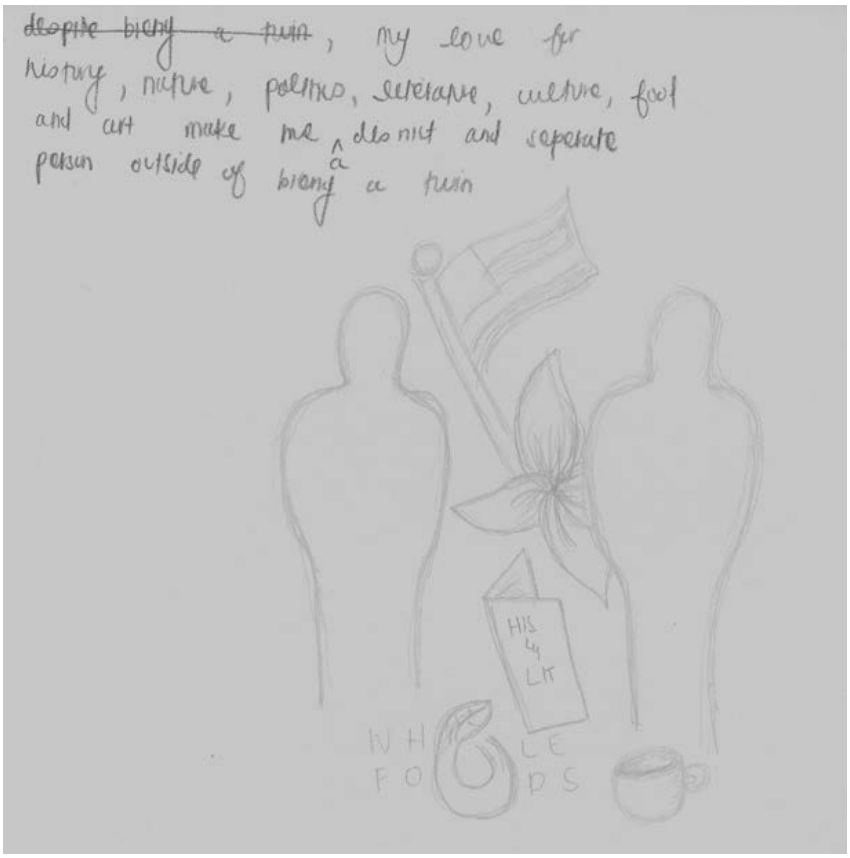

Figure 7.3. Alyssa's self-representation drawing.

Beyond the discourses on inherited talent, family plays a major role in the solidification of artist identities, through positive reinforcement, as Lily describes:

> Well, one thing that's been really special, and not a specific piece of art, but growing up, my dad always did take interest in what I did. So, on top of being known as the creative one in the classroom, that was really something I identified as at home as well because he would always be interested in what I was making and be very encouraging and he hung up a bunch of my works on the wall and he still has them hung up and it's just a reminder. He's just always taken an interest into what I'm doing art-wise. So, that's been really encouraging to keep making art.

Hence, family reinforcement of artist identities was an important finding of the research.

Artist Self as Work in Progress

As they continued their narratives, the young artists proceeded to describe themselves in the present moment and how they had found "the right medium" to express what they hoped to express and how they had found a "safe space" within the CAC within which to share their ideas with peers. As others in the group described (Lucy, Tristan), Alex described his self-portrait as an ongoing work in progress. When he did his self-representation drawing, Tristan noted that his drawing was not finished, saying, "I drew myself. I'm not finished yet, but…" This may have just been that he had not had time to finish the drawing, but, nonetheless, I found this to be an apt metaphor for the process of identity formation—it is always a work in progress. I told Alex, "I like that you were saying that you can add to it as you have different things that you are trying to work through." Hence, this painting is not only about re-presenting the self over and over but working through things again and again through this artwork of the self in a practice of both self-care and self-formation. Alex noted, "It's never a finished piece for me. It's just around it, I'm adding colors that represent strong emotions I have and defining them by their shape and their color according to the person." It seemed as if Alex was literally making his self through his portraiture. I sought to be encouraging as I felt that Alex was incredibly brave for sharing this with me, a person who he had only recently met. These resembled other interns' representations of their unfinished selves. The development of the self is always a work in progress.

This incompleteness seemed to serve as a metaphor for the way the self and the representation of the self is never complete. Lucy also referred to incompleteness in describing a characteristic that she admired in works of art, stating,

> When it comes to art, I am drawn to pieces that are some level of incomplete. Visible pencil marks, exposed, unpainted canvas, sketches that are clearly drafts–whether they are intentional or not, artistic imperfections draw me in. Along with this I am interested in art (specifically of the activist sort) that is meant to convey a societal issue that the

> artist might personally identify with. I try to emulate this through my art. I am partial to figure studies and sketches as final pieces. I let my work be completed by leaving it incomplete. I try to celebrate the way that art doesn't need to be "finished" in order to be art. I also use my art to shine light upon issues, such as homophobia, that affect me directly or that affect those around me. Through my art, especially my most recent piece dealing with homophobia and includes a Marsha P. Johnson quote, I try to convey this.

Lucy's interest in describing her work as "incomplete" could also be a reflection on her identity as "incomplete" in a way that is not fully formed and still open to new ways of being. This is the case for any person forging an identity and it is so fitting that she ties this incompleteness to her art and herself as an artist. It is also particularly significant how she tries to tie this interest in the incomplete to her interest in art that addresses social injustice. It is a good reminder that the struggles for social justice are ongoing.

Imagined Futures in the Arts: Practical versus Dreaming

Most of the interns concluded their narratives with aspirations for the future as artists often involving plans to leave New Orleans for larger cities like New York or Los Angeles where they expected to achieve ambitious goals. Some of the interns, while they still wanted to be involved in the arts, felt social pressure to pursue more "practical" work where they were more likely find financial stability. Some, like Lily, did not necessary want to be an artist as a career and thought of art as more of a hobby. When asked about a career in the arts, Lily, who said that she wanted to go to medical school one day, stated that "as far as college studies go and pursuing that as a career, it's probably not going to be a realistic choice for me, but like I said, I don't want to give it up and I want to keep it as a hobby." However, most of the interns viewed their artistic identity as directly aligned with their plans for a future career. In some ways, this aligned with socioeconomic status. It seemed that, overall, those who were more privileged economically felt more freedom to pursue artistic career goals. On the flipside, Joey, who

seemed to be more economically privileged than most of the others in the group, wanted to continue participation in local theatre while pursuing a career as a lawyer or veterinarian and to preserve his economic stability.

While some of the interns seemed to be driven to participate in the Jasmine joined the CAC Teen Arts Internship several days after it had begun because she had been in Chicago where she spent two weeks in an early college program through the Art Institute of Chicago. Of the interns in the CAC program, Jasmine seemed to be one of the most driven to explore national opportunities such as this and seemed to be taking strategic actions in pursuit of her goals as an artist. Jasmine stated: "I don't really pay attention to things going on in New Orleans, locally. I'm more on a national scale." Like many of the interns, Jasmine did not want to be hindered by the limitations she associated with the city of New Orleans and envisioned herself as an artist with a broader scope.

Some of the interns experienced resistance to their desire for pursuit of arts careers either for financial reasons or because arts careers were perceived to lack stability and practicality. When I asked Tristan if his parents were supportive of his artistic pursuits, he said that his parents were supportive, but they were concerned about him getting a job: "Yeah, they are definitely supportive. They want me to succeed in what I'm doing. But, my dad is so stuck on me having to get a job and stuff like that. I don't believe in getting a 9-5 and going to that every day. Both of my parents, they'll wake up and I'll see them go, "Ugh, I have to go to work." Why would you want to wake up and be miserable every day?" Interestingly, Tristan connected not wanting a 9-5 job to not wanting to be "miserable" with work. A career in the arts was perceived to be more exciting and more fulfilling. Rose also described her family's underlying concerns with her ambitions to become an artist. She said that although she had not had anyone "directly

discourage me," she did feel some sense of skepticism from her family members who wanted to ensure that she was being "practical" in her career choices. Even though Rose described this underlying feeling of being discouraged, she remained determined to pursue her goals in the arts.

In their imaginings of the future, many of the interns invoked the concept of "dreams." While some might have viewed a career in the arts as unrealistic, most of the interns fully embraced the "dream" of being an artist. The CAC was viewed as a place where one could begin to work towards these goals, as James noted: "They're realistic about what's going to happen, but they never shut down your dreams or de-validate them or anything like that." The interns often scoffed at attempts to thwart them on this path. Tristan, for example, stated the following: "I honestly don't think about challenges as much because I know I can complete it." Tristan offered a counter-perspective to people who might say that he was "dreaming too much" view. He was confident in his potential as an artist and sought to prove nay-sayers wrong. Jasmine also approached her role as an artist with ambition and optimism and she had confidence in her ability to create art that would make an impact on the world. Tristan, who identifies as biracial (Black and White) and Jasmine, who identifies as Black offer counter-perspectives on Charland's (2010) research on Black students and artist identity. In Charland's study, Black students indicated a reluctance to identify as artists because of the similarities between negative stereotypes about Black people and negative stereotypes about artists (i.e., "poor," "unstable," etc.). Although Charland's research referencing "identity foreclosure" was very influential in my conceptualization of this research, it is also important to consider counter-perspectives on this. In a different context, such as New Orleans, a city where Black artistic and cultural practices are widely celebrated, young people of color might have a different view of themselves as potential artists.

Finding the Right Medium

Identity work practices happen in the creation and dissemination of identity artifacts and, in the case of artist identity work, this often involves experimentation with various art media and the creation of art (Kee, 2016). Artifacts are also key to the recruitment and maintenance of oneself within the figured world of the arts. Artworks, art supplies, art books, even social media posts could function as artifacts. They are material/tangible objects that are used to assert one's place in the art world. Seeing artworks during the gallery walk and identifying the artworks with one's past, present, and future selves, the young artists internalized their connection to the artworld through artifacts. Several of the interns described their quest towards "finding the right medium" for expression in the arts.

A Multiplicity of Media

Many of the interns were interested in wide range of disciplinary formats in the arts. Although he is enrolled in a specialized visual arts program at his school, Tristan's artistic interests are widely multidisciplinary. Tristan said that he was interested in "music, clothing design, writing. I just like to create things. I don't like to just be a robot and follow along with things. I like to have fun and sit down and do my thing." When Tristan characterized his identity as an artist, he seemed to demonstrate that being an artist demonstrates a sense of agency, saying that being an artist is the opposite of being a "robot." He described his future career goals as follows:

> I know for sure that visual arts will be incorporated with it, but I don't know if that's going to be the main thing. I want to produce music and also create clothing and do visual arts and things like that. I want to keep moving and make things that people enjoy and people can gain inspiration from.

Cecilia also discussed this, saying:

> Every week, Stella asks us, "What is something you want to do when you're older?" I feel like my answer was always different, but it's all the same. Somehow, I mentioned film and photography. Last week, I mentioned how I still like fashion and everybody looked at me like, "Wait, no, that's not what you said." It's all the same. It all comes together. There's not really a limit to what you can do with art. It's all bits and pieces of different art forms put together and that's why I like doing it because I'm not limited in anything that I do. I drew a camera, a music note, and a journal because over the past four years, my life has really revolved around going to concerts and shows and music is something that helps me connect with people and I like to songwrite, and, it has a broken heart because I use my experiences to write.

Finding the Right Medium as Finding Self

Finding the right medium was described as a process of self-discovery by many of the interns. Some of the interns were quick to commit to one medium while others were consistently trying new ones out. Many described it as a process where they found themselves and found something that they loved enough to struggle through the challenges associated with mastering their medium of choice. I heard from several interns that that it's almost like you have all these things that you want to express, and you want to say, but it's difficult to find the right medium to do so. For example, Tristan said, "It's good to stay busy, but at times it can be hard because all the ideas in my head, it's hard to get out." As many of the other interns expressed, Tristan often felt overwhelmed by all his ideas and connected finding the right medium as finding oneself and the tools to be oneself and express oneself**.** The interns described finding the right medium as a wrenching process of self-discovery.

Rose described early memories of making art as a child and how the material tool of the camera was a significant force in her experience. Excitedly, Rose described finding the medium that she best connected to—photography, describing the sense of discovery that "'Hey, this is mine.'" Rose offered a phenomenological description of what it felt like for her to create art. In her description, she was trying to find the words to capture the "weird feeling" she experienced

in painting and in creating photographs. What is also significant in this passage is that Rose describes the feelings she experienced in finding the medium of photography. This sense of passion for the medium motivated her to want to learn more about it and to develop her skills with it. Her description of the development her connection to the medium of photography took on a tone of mystique, as if in discovering photography, she discovered herself.

The Right Medium as Passion

This quest for the right medium became a search for the art form for which one had the most "passion," where one felt that they would be motivated to dedicate the hard work required to perfect their craft. This finding of the medium of artistic expression where one feels a sense of "passion" seemed to be helpful for motivating them to continue to pursue it even when it became difficult. Many expressed internalizing the identity of artist, saying, "it's who I am" and "it's my passion." For example, Alex stated: "It's my passion. I don't know how to say anything other than that. It's what I do. It's not really a choice for me. It's, "Do I want to keep living and stay happy? I'm going to have to do this."" Both Alex and James noted that their passion for particular art forms motivated them to work hard to develop their skills in these areas. For example, Alex stated, "I think it's a bit different with visual arts as opposed to dance or music because I'm so passionate about it, I'm willing to do the work in order to build my skills. So, it's a bit different." Upon describing his experimentation with a wide range of forms of artistic expression, James described finding filmmaking as "where I belong" and expressed that he felt "passion to push through every film" even when it was difficult.

Passion for a specific medium also translated into passion for art in a more general sense where "talent becomes recognized not only through being good but through the demonstration of

passion" (Gaztambide-Fernández, Saifer, & Desai, 2013, p. 129). This opportunity to develop a sense of "passion" for creating art in a particular way is notably only available to those who can access such (Lackey & Murphy, 2011). As Gaztambide-Fernández, Saifer, & Desai, 2013 state:

> What is perhaps more pervasive as a misrecognition of social inequality are the ways in which prior exposure to the arts is interpreted in relationship to the more elusive criteria of passion for the arts and how this is linked to the notion of talent. (p. 129)

Others were more ambivalent about whether or not art was a passion for them. Lucy, for example, stated: "It's one of my main passions, but I realize that dedicating all my time to art would limit me a lot because I'm interested in a lot more things like I participate in a good amount of extra-curriculars and I realize that I'm not as dedicated to art as someone who's pursuing their education in art would be." She seemed to feel as if perhaps they found that they did not have enough passion to sustain a career in the arts that they should pursue other avenues. When Lucy said: "I feel like if I tried to go to art school, I would realize that maybe art isn't exactly my passion or my main passion because as much as I do love it, I'm interested in so many other things," this indicates that she may not want to make art her central focus as she transitions into college and a career. The consensus, however, though, was that being an artist needed to be driven by a sense of "passion." For some this was a choice, for others, a means of survival. As Alex noted: "It's my passion. I don't know how to say anything other than that. It's what I do. It's not really a choice for me. It's, "Do I want to keep living and stay happy? I'm going to have to do this.'"

Anticipating Personal and Social Consequences of Being an Artist

In this research, I considered: What are the consequences of artist identity work? Herein, I analyze the consequences of artist identity work in the study and beyond. First, I examine the

discourses expressed in the study about the personal consequences of artist identity work from the perspectives of the young people in the study. Such personal consequences include the use of artist identity work to nurture one's emotional needs. These personal consequences, however, are always also social and political. Hence, while personal consequences might manifest as emotional and deeply individualized ways, they are inextricably linked to the social. Hence, I also consider the discourses around the social implications about what the arts do, particularly in terms of social justice. Herein, I discuss the ways in which the interns expressed their views on what the arts "do" individually and in society.

In my data collection, when my research participants articulated the consequences of artist identity work, they took specific positions on the issues at hand. For example, they made assertions that art was a valuable tool for coping with emotional distress and/or that art was a way to make a political statement. In taking these positions, the young artists of the study were also staking claims about who their identities—what kind of person they were and what kind of artist they were and what they believed to be the value of engaging in identification as an artist.

Clarke's (2005) positional mapping is a useful tool in delineating some of the consequences of artist identity work for this study. For Clarke (2005), "issues, positions on issues, absences of positions where they might be expected (sites of discursive silence), and differences in discursive positions central to the situation under study are the focus of positional maps" (p. 126). These positions are viewed separately from individual perspectives and practices. For example, there is the practice of journaling that exists separately from what is written about during the journaling process.

Conceptualizations of the consequences or outcomes of engaging in processes of artist identity work are positional statements. These positions are evaluative of what it means to be an

artist. They describe ideas about how engaging in artistic practices can be of benefit to individuals and to society. These positional statements are discursive. These discourses shape the situation and are constitutive of it. So, these may not be really consequences, but, instead, powerful discourses about what it means to be an artist and the value of taking on the role of artist in society. These are not just consequences, but these are reasons why one engages in this artistic activity. They are also part of the activity itself. When Stella asked the interns to write about why they make art, these are some of the things that they said. This was the situation itself. It was not a consequence of the situation.

Finally, this study analyzes the consequences or outcomes of participation in the cultivation of artist identities in young people. Consequences of artist identity work may or may not involve an embrace of an artist identity with an imagined future career in the arts. Several interns expressed lofty goals about an imagined future in the arts, while others hoped to maintain an artistic practice while pursuing careers outside of the arts. Further, an identification with the arts may or may not yield an increased predilection towards personal or collective agency, with social (in)justice implications. Several interns described their artistic practice as essential to their well-being and their sense of selfhood and expressed that the arts enhanced their individual lives in positive ways. Finally, in part, through their participation in this internship, the interns had developed a sense that the arts could be used as a tool of social justice and collective activism and embraced this aspect of their artistic practice.

Art as Emotional Expression

Several of the interns describing artmaking as a cathartic, emotional experience. Many of the interns expressed the importance of art in helping them to process their emotions and to cope

with challenging personal situations. Art was often described as a form of therapy. Some, like Tristan discussed learning about oneself through artmaking: "Through drawing and stuff like that you realize a lot about yourself. What you're going through." I asked Tristan about how artmaking helps him deal with personal issues or emotions. He said:

> Making music does help a lot with that. Sitting there making the instrumentals and making different melodies and stuff. That's how you get out different emotions that you can't put into words. You put it into sounds and stuff like that. That kind of stuff just feels good.

I noted that making art can help one to work through personal issues as well as learn about themselves. Tristan agreed, saying, "You'll be drawing a portrait of yourself and just the way that the line work is, just the way, it shows anxiety. It shows all your emotions in the line work and all the colors that you're using."

Lucy also described artmaking was a form of stress-relief: "I think it's definitely an outlet for stress because for me, visual arts, putting a pencil to paper can really be a tension release." Alex also discussed the emotional aspects of making art: "I make art to help myself deal with things. I associate colors with feelings. So, I'll pick up a bunch of colors and start painting and at the end I'm like, "Oh." It helps me make something that helps me feel better than I was before. I guess it's a very freeing process."

Yet, The Personal is Political

Even though the interns discussed the personal consequences of their work as artists, the personal overlaps with the political. For example, James frames his connection between his work as an artist and his identity as a gay male as both motivating him and helping him to overcome fears about what others think of him. James states: "I think it's influenced me in only a positive way. It's made me grow a lot because, in both my art practice and my LGBTQ+

personal life, both, I've gotten those comments of, "Maybe you should tone this down a little bit and maybe people will start to like it more or people will start to accept it more" and I've combined those to say, "it's not just because being gay is bad or it's not just because having this certain type of artwork is bad or being weird is bad. It's the people who are being negative and not yourself. As long as you're not hurting anyone that being yourself should always be okay." I think they've fed off of each other and pushed each other to express myself more and be myself and be confident, which I still struggle with, but I'm growing and learning more that caring less about what people think makes less stress for myself."

Hence, the emotional or personal benefits or consequences of adopting an artist identity and engaging in artist identity work is not a selfishly-indulgent act but can act as a preservation of the self. Most especially, engagement in artist identity work can function to preserve selves that are not often valued by the wider society. Feminist thinkers have long engaged the concept of "the personal is political" and the importance of self-care as self-preservation. When so many have to fight to assert that Black lives matter, self-preservation becomes a radical act in the face of those who would claim that the lives of those who are marginalized matter less than the lives of those who are privileged. Just like they didn't want to be all affected by Katrina, just by being here, they are. As Alex said, by existing they defy odds. So, in a way, being oneself and expressing oneself through art is a radical act. The *Rainy Days* video was a strong example of the personal is political. The interns masterfully evoked the pain experienced by members of the LGBTQ+ community in a society where, in spite of some incremental progress, much discrimination remains prevalent.

While art in the 21st century has become a venue for activism, the role of artist as activist has often remained in the purview of the privileged few. Those who have inherited the arts

through familial ties, access to art camps and those who can afford to take on unpaid internships, to attend special art classes. While the activist rhetoric associated with this program is inspiring and the interns were sincerely devoted to activist stances, and their instructor was superbly equipped to inspire the young interns to get involved in creating art for activist purposes, there remains unanswered questions. I came back to my hometown of New Orleans wanted to explore access to an artist identity and I found a perfect program where young people were given a wide range of tools with which to explore their identities as artists and to execute activist works of art in a "safe space" and an encouraging environment. Yet, I continually felt this nagging disturbance that this program was not enough, that my students who were the most disenfranchised within the city of New Orleans were not able to access this program and that their absence loomed large over my thoughts as I went each day to observe.

Much of the internship was situated in an activist perspective. This seemed to confirm the notion that community-based and/or museum-based art programming offers spaces for social justice art education more readily than art education in school settings. I connect this to the idea that school-based art education can be restrictive to the agency of students and functions to maintain rather than disrupt the status quo. Several of the interns described the differences between making art in school settings as opposed to outside of school settings, noting that there is often more "freedom" to express social justice-oriented ideas through art outside of school. Within community-based and museum-based programs, there is more space for agency and more opportunities for the mobilization of art for social justice purposes and for the development of an identity as an artist who works for social justice. Being an artist who works towards social justice is an integral part of the identities of the interns in the Teen Arts Internship program. These artist identities have been fostered by early opportunities to engage in art learning beyond

school facilitated by parents and their socioeconomic status. Does the engagement in artistic identity work provide one with greater access to a sense of personal and collective agency? If this is not accessed, what are the consequences of this?

When I asked Tristan about the way his art impacts the world, he replied: "I guess my art makes people think a lot more. It also makes them happy because I use a lot of vibrant colors and bright colors in my art." I questioned Tristan as to whether or not his work has or might have an activist impact, he said, "Not necessarily because I'm not really working for another person. I'm working to express my own thoughts. Of course, when you get into social activism, you'll create things to go along with the issue you're talking about, but it's not like, "I need to be socially active right now. I need to go create that at the moment." You're just sitting there drawing what you're thinking about." Despite his ambivalence of using art as an activist tool, Tristan discussed an interest in using his art to shock people, noting: "That's how you get people to listen. If your work isn't controversial, no one's really going to listen as much as they should." Hence, even when the interns were ambivalent about fully embracing an activist approach, they seemed to have an almost preconscious sense that art could be a powerful tool for garnering a sense of disorienting breakthrough from the everyday that could lead to social change.

Negotiating Sociocultural Identities

Sociocultural identity factors play a role in one's identification as an artist. Along with negotiating and narrativizing one's artistic identity, the interns were simultaneously engaged in negotiating aspects of their sociocultural identities. The interns were engaged in a constant negotiation of the many facets of their identities as they grappled with their racial identities, class identities, regional identities, gender identities, sexual identities, and religious identities. This

notion of “who I am” in sociocultural terms is intertwined with “what I do” as an artist. As I tell you my life story, a snapshot of “who I am,” I will say that I am a White middle-class female art educator, for example. I might then proceed to tell you a little bit about my background, where I am from, where I went to school, what I do now, and what I anticipate doing in the future. In some cases, I am able to name these aspects of my identities for myself and in other cases, they are named by others.

While the group could be described as somewhat racially diverse, in terms of representation of the population of New Orleans, this group included proportionally more White teens than is representative of the population of young people in New Orleans as a whole. Most of the students attend private schools, highly selective elite public schools, or are homeschooled. Where they went to school was an indicator of class. Many of the interns expressed complex feelings about their experiences with religion—mostly Catholicism. Indeed, like many of the White middle class in the New Orleans area, several of the interns attended Catholic schools and this held a significant influence over their lives.

In addition, several of the interns identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community and described how, for them, developing confidence as an artist worked in tandem with developing confidence as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. James, for example, stated his identity as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and as an artist: “I think they’ve fed off of each other and pushed each other to express myself more and be myself and be confident, which I still struggle with, but I’m growing and learning more that caring less about what people think makes less stress for myself.” Joey, a White male, discussed how his identification as bisexual has influenced other aspects of his life to be more empathetic towards other who experience sexism and/or racism, saying, “I do get the feeling of what that is like” to experience discrimination.

Thinking about identify formation of young artists in context de-neutralizes our understanding of this process and acknowledges that social, cultural, political, economic, and religious factors influence artist identity formation.

Negotiating the Idea of Artist Self as Activist Self

Contemporary arts and arts education practices are increasingly situated as tools for social justice. Artistically-identified young people in arts education settings, particularly out-of-school settings, find artistic practice to be used as a means of personal expression as well as a tool for social activism. The young people in this study were particularly attuned towards developing art that is both personal and political. One consequence of artist identity work is identifying as an artist, but also as an activist. Within this internship program, the idea that, as Elizabeth Sackler, founder of the Sackler Center for Feminist Art and former chair of the board of the Brooklyn Museum says, "art is intrinsically a form of social activism" (Miller, 2016).

Some of the interns were hesitant to embrace an "activist artist" identity, but they did admit that their own experiences could be viewed by others as political. And, even if they didn't intend for their work to be political, they acknowledged that it could be. For example, James said, "I definitely want to bring in activism or not necessarily activism, but more "art for change" into his work but stated that he did not "necessarily want to use a specific movement like the rights or Black Lives Matter." Cecilia noted that she was interested in developing her work into a more activist perspective, saying, "One day, I would want to do more social awareness stuff," that she currently felt discouraged in getting involved in activism by her parents, she said, "That's why I do my personal stuff, if you're going to hold me back and not let me do actual social activism work. I think, you have to have art because if nobody says something and if

nobody speaks up, everybody's just afraid." Some outright rejected this label of activist, but others felt that they were beginning to embrace it—as they were being orientated (Ahmed, 2008) towards and around artist identities by engaging in the activities of the internship. Joey expressed ambivalence about claiming to be an activist artist. Indeed, he took a decidedly non-activist stance in describing his work. Joey said: "I've never really wanted to do any kind of activist art. My art is usually just fluffy cats. Not fluffy cats that support anything or put down anything else." I pressed Joey to consider whether his cat art might be activist in some way. Joey said: "I am sure I could make it that way," but that "this activist approach, it's great, just not my thing."

Jasmine came into the internship with an activist artist perspective, but reflected upon this development over time, saying, that she "used to make art because it was fun," but that "now it's more of a purpose around social justice issues because I feel like art without a purpose isn't art at all." Throughout the course of the internship, the young people in the study became increasingly motivated to use artistic practice as a tool for social activism and to identify themselves as activist artists. For example, Rose stated: "Art as activism photography is something I have recently discovered, and I have become extremely passionate about it" and Tristan expressed: "Learning about all of the social activism … that's really helping me because I've been trying to become a social activist," and Alex said that his art "will probably develop into very activist art at some point," in part because of his identity as transgender. Indeed, as Holland & Lachicotte (2007) write: "Identities are not byproducts of social change; identities are the means by which change acquires agents and becomes effective" (p. 128).

Although the internship itself and the students involved in the internship were focused on the arts as means for addressing social change, the participants were mostly of elite

socioeconomic backgrounds. Indeed, this study highlights the gap in equitable access and participation in such transformative arts education programming (Kraehe et al., 2016). This program, while somewhat diverse in terms of race/ethnicity and gender/sexuality, it was mostly populated with students who attended private schools, were homeschooled, or who attended elite charter schools and did not, in general, seem to reach students who are marginalized by social class. While this intensive program that trains artists to use their work for social justice purposes, it does so through the socioeconomic elites of New Orleans rather than through the socioeconomically marginalized. Indeed, further progress in expanding equitable access to social justice-oriented art education where youth have opportunities to develop their identities as activist artists is imperative.

Dis/identification: Ambivalence/Rejection/Exclusion from an Artist Identity

There are some who, after residing on the edge of the figured world of the arts who will decide to reject further engagement with the world. This refusal may be for many reasons that connect back to the equity in the arts framework. For example, one may not feel that members of their cultural groups are adequately represented in the world. Or, they may just not want to participate because they do not feel welcome or comfortable. Even though Tristan fully participated in the arts internship, he did say that he did not feel completely at ease in the room where most of the internship took place, often seeking to leave the room to visit with friends who were working as camp counselors in other parts of the building. Lauren, in her poem, used the word, "isolated." There are some members such as Jasmine who will persist despite such barriers. Indeed, Jasmine seemed determined to utilize this program along with the many other arts enrichment programs she was involved in to her advantage—to network, to gain experience,

to gain skills that she knew would help her to advance her goals in the arts. Charland's (2010) study demonstrates an example of this rejection of an artist identity. Some rejections of artist identity might be empowering, some rejections might be related to the notion that careers in the arts are not financially stable, and some rejections might be linked to a disidentification with the mythologized notion of an artist as White, male, modernist "genius."

Conclusions

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of the research through four themes: Deploying "Artist" Discourses; Narrativizing Past, Present and Future "Artist" Selves; Finding the Right Medium as Finding Self; and Anticipating Personal and Social Consequences. These findings illustrated some of the consequences that result from artist identity work. As the interns deployed discourses about artists—artists as creative, artists as depressed, artists as eccentric—they also worked to situate themselves within these ways of talking about artists. As they discussed their trajectories in the arts, the young artists used linguistic and visual methods to narrativize their paths as artists, often in terms of past, present, and future. As the interns struggled to find an artistic medium that they felt best suited them, they tried out several different avenues, a process that paralleled their quests for self-awareness. Finally, the interns considered the personal consequences such as emotional expression and the social consequences such as activism through their reflections on why and how they create art.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

Using portraiture methodology (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) and social practice theory (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), this study examined the identity work of young people engaged in a social justice-oriented teen arts internship program at a contemporary arts center in New Orleans. Through the lens of this teen arts internship, the objectives of this study were to investigate contextual influences on identity work, narrative-based and activity-based practices of artist identity work, and consequences of artist identity work in young people in terms of social justice art education. This research asked four central questions. Through the lens of a teen arts internship at a contemporary arts center in post-Katrina New Orleans, 1) How do contextual figured worlds influence artist identity work? 2) How does artist identity work manifest through narrative-based practices? 3) How does artist identity work manifest in activities? 4) What are the consequences of artist identity work? The findings of this study provoke considerations of how to expand equitable access to art education programming and, in turn, access to spaces for the development of social justice-oriented artistic identities in young people.

For art educators, it can be difficult to examine one's own practices from outside of the figured world of art education because of one's embeddedness within the field. Yet, to understand how artists are constructed within the figured world of art education, it is important to try to examine the practices of the figured world of art education. Utilizing social practice theory and critical race portraiture methodology, this study investigated how young people engaged in artist identity work and offers descriptions of what artist identity work looked like in practice. Further, this study considered how structural factors influenced the enactment of artist identity

work within experiences of teen artists in figured world contexts such as schools, home, religion, community arts programs, museums, the media, and post-Katrina New Orleans. Finally, this study investigated the consequences of artist identity work in young people. Consequences of artist identity work may or may not involve an embrace of an artist identity with an imagined future in the arts. Further, an identification with the arts may or may not yield an increased predilection towards personal or collective agency, with social (in)justice implications. This research, thus, offers insight into the practices of artist identity work, the contextual influences of identity work, and the implications of artist identity work in young people in terms of social justice.

I have presented what I observed in terms of narratives, contexts, and activities for the young people involved in this internship program designed around the development of young artists. This is not to say that the students I observed are the standard-bearers for what identity formation looks like. However, this program was specifically geared towards identity development in teens and, thus, is reflective to some degree of what artistic identity development consists of in teens in New Orleans. What this snapshot also reveals is the exclusionary practices involved in artist identity formation—who is oriented toward and around (Ahmed, 2008) an artist identity and who is absent from participation in the opportunity to consider an artist identity. The study described the participants and how they developed their identities through specific practices, in specific contexts, and the consequences of this identity work. It also considered the exclusion involved in such a program given the racialized and classed context of New Orleans and how this has consequences in terms of equity in arts education.

Multidimensionality of Arts Education Equity

The challenges of equity in arts education are complex, multifaceted, and not easily resolved through single methods or tactics. In theory, the CAC Teen Arts Internship program was available to any teen in New Orleans and even those from other parts of the state of Louisiana. However, access and participation were limited to those who knew about the program in the first place, those who opted to engage, those who were able to attend regularly, those who did not need to work during the summer (indeed, many teens were working as paid camp counselors for the CAC, but they probably couldn't afford to do an unpaid internship like this), those who had transportation (Jordan had to ride a bike to get there and often couldn't find a place to lock up his bike), and those who felt at ease here (Tristan did not feel at ease, but he came everyday anyway; Lauren described feeling isolated).

Considering Kraehe's (2018) lens for a multidimensional understanding of equity in arts education: distribution, access, participation, effects, recognition, and transformation, this study posits that the formation of an artistic identity is central to understanding equity and inequity in art education. These aspects of arts education equity influence who can become an artist. Who gets the distribution of art education resources? Who has access to art education and opportunities to develop an artist identity? Who participates in art education and artist identity formation practices? What are the effects of particular types of art education? Who is recognized as an artist? Who is privy to transformative art education experiences? Hence, access to an artist identity is an equity issue. However, even among those with privilege, there is pressure to reject an artist identity for social, economic, and cultural reasons even if there is encouragement to develop one's artistic abilities as a means of enrichment, as a hobby, as a way to get into college, for example. Indeed, careers in the visual arts are dismissed among people

with a wide range of positionalities. Hence, because there are many restrictions on engagement in the arts, the claiming an artist identity can be an act of "transformational resistance … a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice" (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 319), especially for youth who are identified as members of marginalized communities.

Additional research—both qualitative and quantitative—into equity and social justice in art education using a multidimensional equity framework could provide greater evidence for the importance of equitable access to art education. Indeed, the review of existing literature from Kraehe et al. (2016) into these areas indicated that while there has been some research into these areas of study, much more research is warranted. For example, one could investigate barriers to participation in out-of-school art education programs and then utilize this research to work towards ways of removing such barriers.

Institutional Sites of Art Education and In/equity

Institutional sites of art education—K-12 schools, universities, museums, community arts centers—even with their increased interest in social justice topics, must strive for a multidimensional equity (Kraehe, 2017). Several factors contribute to exclusionary practices within artworlds. As demonstrated in this research, many young people who come to be orientated towards the arts feel as if they have found "safe spaces" where they can "be themselves" even when they may have felt alienated or isolated within other spaces. Language used by the young artists in this study such as "belonging" and "passion" indicated a deeply emotional, embodied sense of connection to the arts—and finding specific avenues for individual expression often helped them to express themselves freely. And, while the opportunity to be oneself and express oneself freely may be an admirable goal, it is also fraught with ideologies of

individualism and exclusivity. As Gaztambide-Fernández, Saifer, & Desai (2013) note, such passion is often conflated with the concept of talent within the arts—and used as a criterion for admission into specialized arts education programming for so-called "gifted and talented" students. Engagement in arts communities provides a sense of "belonging" for some, but for those who do feel that they do not "belong" in such spaces, the artworld is an exclusionary construct (Gaztambide-Fernández & Parekh, 2017).

While I might never have found myself in this position as a PhD candidate in Art Education had I never been formally "identified" as talented in the visual arts as a child, I do question the identification process involved in recruiting students into programs for "talent" in the arts. When I became a Talented in the Arts—Visual (TAV) teacher myself in pre-Katrina New Orleans, I continued to participate in this rarefication of the artist identity, perpetuating the notion that an artist is something special and that artistic "talent" is something inherent rather than something cultivated (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2013). Even in my early days of teaching students identified as TAV, I knew that this system was unfair. I tried to bring as many students as possible into the program, even if informally. Although, as this study demonstrates, the development of an artist identity is a multi-layered socially constructed process, discourses about "artists," "the arts," and "talent" continue to reinforce notions of exclusivity and restrict access to the formation of an artist identity to a select group, often those who are already privileged, and, often those who are White and male, perpetuating the perspective of "the arts as white property" (Kraehe et al., in press).

Further research into the sociocultural factors influencing student identification for gifted and talented art education programming could reveal issues of injustice at work in such processes. For example, one might examine the familial influences on such identification as

gifted and/or talented in the arts. As I found within this research, many young people who are identified as artistic often have other family members who are artists, have parents who have provided multiple opportunities for early artistic development, and/or have family members who recognized and fostered their "talent" from a very young age. Research into these patterns might dispel some of the myths about artistic talent as inherent and open up opportunities to reduce some of the exclusivity associated with the arts.

Several of the interns expressed that they felt a greater sense of freedom to explore the creation of activist-oriented artwork within the out-of-school programming of the internship as compared to the greater rigidity they experience in their school art experiences. They lamented the lack of opportunities for expression of their ideas related to activism through their art within their K-12 art education. Indeed, museum and community-based art education programming is often geared less towards the development of technical artistic skills and more towards the fostering of discussions and artmaking practices that directly relate to the functions of contemporary art, of which activism is often a part.

Further research could investigate how social justice art education and/or activist art education has been implemented or avoided within K-12 art education. Researchers could study the curriculum and pedagogy of K-12 art educators who have successfully incorporated social justice and activist artmaking practices. In addition, further inquiry into the experiences of student participants in such justice-oriented curricular experiences in K-12 schools would provide valuable insights to guide further research, theory, and practice.

Contrasting experiences between school arts education programming and out-of-school arts education in places such as museums and community arts centers influence the ways in which students embrace an artist identity and the nature of the artist identity they develop.

Young people who identify as artists are particularly well-served by arts education programming that is immersive, sustained, and that allows safe spaces for them to explore various aspects of their emerging identities. In contrast to the restrictive arts education programming that students often experience in schools, opportunities to engage in arts education outside of school spaces in community-based programs allow young people the chance to take risks and explore aspects of themselves that often must be suppressed in school settings. Art education researchers might investigate the perspectives of young people who are involved in community-based art education programming.

Scholars of art education have long advocated for LGBTQ+ rights within educational contexts (Check, 2004; Check & Ballard, 2014; Cosier & Sanders, 2007; Greteman, 2017; Lampela, 2001; Lampela & Check, 2003; Wolfgang & Rhodes, 2017). Within this internship, several of the interns identified as LGBTQ+ and used the opportunities in this internship as a space for personal expression as well as social justice activism around LGBTQ+ issues and felt a sense of safety and belonging that they felt was lacking within their school settings. Future inquiry could consider how community-based art education serve students who are marginalized within their school settings such as members of the LBGTQ+ community.

In recent years, museums and community arts centers have increasingly begun to offer teen arts education programming and this programming is often instrumental in the art-related identity development of young people (Butler, 2014; Erickson & Hales, 2014; Rose, 2016). In many cases, such programming offers increased opportunities to go beyond the limitations of the school art curriculum and to further engage social justice issues through art. However, as Lackey and Murphy (2011) state: “While non-school settings do hold vast potential for re-thinking and invigorating art education, they simultaneously provide fields of play that permit

those who already hold power and resources opportunities to activate privilege and maintain inequities in informal ways" (p. 4). While students have often lamented the lack of "freedom" to do art as they wished within school contexts, it is relevant to point out that, at least in most public schools, there is the at the least the potential for equitable access and participation in art education. Whereas, access and participation in museum-based arts education is fraught with more barriers to access and participation (Hartman & Hines-Bergmeier, 2015). So, this "freedom" that is supposedly available to young people who participate in such out-of-school programming is not readily available to those who do not participate for various reasons.

Recent research into efforts in museum education towards more inclusive practices is promising. For example, several researchers have examined how museum education programs are directly addressing racism in museum education settings (Dewhurst & Hendrick, 2017; Flanagan, 2017; Harper & Hendrick, 2017). Indeed, although museum education programming has made great strides towards more inclusive practices, there is still more work to be done. Hence, further inquiry into the ways that museums can foster critical and inclusive programming can provide insight that can directly transfer to more equitable museum education practices.

Artist Identity Formation as an Embodied, Racialized, Sociocultural Process

Artist identity formation is an embodied, racialized, sociocultural process situated in a multiplicity of contexts. As a field, art education has long contended with questions such as: Why do we teach art? What are the intended outcomes of art education? How do we prepare young people to become artists? These discussions have historically been situated in sequential frameworks on child and adolescent development in art have focused on the development of drawing skills as a progressively advancing process (i.e., Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1982; Day &

Hurwitz, 2012). Yet, as this study demonstrates, sociocultural factors like race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and other structural aspects of identity inform the artistic identity-making of each of the participants in myriad ways, influencing their access to and their predilections towards participation in arts education programming. This study connects with the historical concern in art education to understand artist identity formation and takes fuller consideration of the sociocultural factors involved in the development of young artists. Further research into sociocultural influences on child and adolescent development might consider more specifically how LGBTQ+ identity intersects with artistic development, how gender influences artist identity formation, and/or how racism within visual culture impacts child and adolescent development in the arts.

Even today, in teaching an arts integration course with an overtly social justice focus, one of my co-instructors was saying that one of the pre-service teachers in our class "wants to make everything about race." I was actually pleased to hear that this student was trying to infuse the course conversation with acknowledgements of the histories of racism in the arts and arts education. I told the instructor that I often had the opposite experience—where pre-service teachers were reluctant to discuss race and racism in the context of their roles as future educators. And yet, to my dismay, I failed to challenge my co-instructor on the claim that the focus of the course was not on racism even though, I knew it nearly always is about race in some way.

As critical race theorists have illuminated, racism is a permanent and deeply embedded feature of life in the United States and in education in particular (Yancy, 2017). And, it is impossible to analyze a set of educational experiences without acknowledging the histories of racism and colonialism at work (Kraehe et al., 2018; Travis & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2018).

Some progress has been made to increase awareness of the role of racism in teaching and learning in art education. And yet, a perusal of the major art education journals and presentations at major art education conferences demonstrates a limited scope of scholarship that critically examines the role of racism in the field.

The identity-orienting narratives, contexts, and activities investigated in this research offer a glimpse into how racialized inequity and social injustice are embedded within the field of art education. In this research I attempted to enter into the experiences of young people identifying as artists—through attempts to capture their experiences, a momentary period in time, through artifacts of their experiences—narratives both written, spoken, and unspoken or embodied, artwork created individually and collectively, and interactions documented through my observational field notes. Racism is not only rooted in attitudes, ideas, and bodies, it also permeates social structures, institutions, and is embedded within the visible and invisible modes of the ordering of social worlds. To more intimately attack racism within sites of education, phenomenological research methods can provoke embodied critical reflection (Lee, 2014; Lewis, 2016; Ngo, 2017). As I proceed in my path as a researcher in art education, I aim to further engage with these and other tools for investigating and, hopefully, working to dismantle racism in arts education.

Considerations for Further Research

This research provokes many more questions that are broader, perhaps more philosophical in nature, questions such as: Who has access to an artist identity? But, also, who has access to the critical consciousness that comes with an activist artist identity? Researching the experiences of artistically-identified youth revealed much about identity formation in young

artists. And yet, in doing this work, I continually returned to the thought of "Who's not here?" I knew that I also needed to look at the big picture of who has access to this opportunity to develop themselves as artists in this setting at all. Cultural arts organizations that offer such programming for teens often don't do enough outreach to marginalized communities. And, although the focus of this study was an out-of-school space, much of the identity work of young artists happens in school settings. Therefore, more attention to how artist identity work happens in schools is needed. This program is technically open to all, but is it really equitably available if there is not participation by marginalized individuals?

Greater attention to the ways in which discourses around "the artist" and "the arts" shape the field of art education are warranted. Further research can unpack some of the exclusionary beliefs about who an artist is and what art is, bringing more inclusive attitudes into practice. While this study focused primarily on elites for whom an identification as "artist" was already in their purview, further research into artist identity formation in youth who are from more marginalized backgrounds or from cultural perspectives where art and artists are defined through frameworks outside of Western notions of art is warranted.

It is not to say that one would need to participate in this particular program in order to be an artist and lay claim to an artist identity. But, participating in this program, accessing this program offers increased access to an artist identity and the privileges that entails. Certainly, it is necessary to problematize the notion of an artist identity and the notion that young people would need a program such as this to access an artist identity. It is not even possible to get to the other dimensions of arts education equity without access and participation. While many of the participants experienced affirmation of their artist and activist identities through this program, but those who did not participate, never even got the chance. While one could say that the artist

identities fostered within the CAC programming was modeled upon the supremacy of whiteness and privilege and that people who are socially marginalized should reject participation in the channels reserved for people who are already maintainers of the status quo. Further reassessment of the ways in which notions of "talent" are tied to privilege are necessary to the cause of equity in art education.

This study advances increased insight into how young people engage in artist identity work and offers descriptions of what artist identity work looks like in practice. Further, this study describes how structural factors such as race/ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality influence the enactment of artist identity work within experiences of teen artists in figured world contexts such as schools, home, community arts programs, museums, the media, and post-Katrina New Orleans. Finally, this study offers an investigation into the consequences of artist identity work in young people in terms of social justice and arts educational equity**.** The intensive personal and social activist stance of this internship program offers opportunities for reflection upon the processes of artist identity work in educational settings for young people.

Personal Reflections in Closing

This inquiry began with my interest in the lives and experiences of young people who are involved in the visual arts inspired by my first TAV students in pre-Katrina New Orleans. And, yet it was also always about my own identity formation process—as a middle class White girl growing up in New Orleans who witnessed the vast inequities around race and class in my hometown and wanted to do something about these injustices. I knew even then that even though my family was not wealthy, we accessed privilege through other means, including whiteness, education, and engagement with various art forms—playing piano, writing poetry,

and making paintings. Even as a teen, prompted by my own formal and informal education (my *currere*)—books I read, teachers who provoked active critique of injustice around race, I developed a critical eye towards racialized injustice that permeated every aspect of life in the United States, and particularly in New Orleans.

I vividly recall my 7th grade language arts teacher who assigned *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as told to Alex Haley to our class and asked us to do a close reading, looking up every word that we did not understand, and critically reflecting upon how what we were reading connected to the injustices that were still present in our contemporary world. I was also deeply influenced by my high school American History teacher who opted to refuse to teach only what was in the textbook, but instead decided to focus most of our class to an in-depth understanding of the Civil Rights Movement—through readings, films like *Eyes on the Prize*, and critical writing assignments. In high school, I also had an opportunity to take a course on Southern Literature and although I was extremely shy, it was in this class where I learned how to unpack racist stereotypes and tropes in literature as well as in aspects of visual culture like film. Throughout high school, I was also taking visual arts classes—one of the only students in my grade level who took four years of art at my high school. So, when I went to Tulane University for my undergraduate studies, I continued to gravitate towards courses in art, mostly printmaking, as well as to study of the African Diaspora, and eventually majored in both Art Studio and African and African Diaspora Studies. Eventually, I became an art educator in New Orleans public schools, traveling between five different schools to deliver art instruction to students identified as talented in the visual arts, a position I held until Hurricane Katrina happened and my life course shifted me to Texas—where I lived, taught art, and attended graduate school at various points over the next several years. Stating all of this makes it sound

as if my interest in the subjects of art and race is purely intellectual, but it is also personal and professional.

While there are many stories I could tell about the personal ways racism has intersected with my life experiences as well as in my professional role as art educator, I will tell one brief illustrative flashpoint/fleshpoint of a story here from my daughter. As I am working on my last round of dissertation revisions, my daughter, a first grader, who, as I noted earlier in the dissertation, is of both African and European ancestry, has been learning a lot about racism lately through books as well as experiences. She told me a story about how the other day in art class, her friend, who is also an African American girl, was painting her dark brown skin white. My daughter told me that her friend told her that she had skin like "poop" and that my daughter had skin like "peanut butter." When I heard this story, I talked to hear about this and tried to be affirming of both her and her friend's brown skin. And yet, I acknowledged that racism, internalized and systematic, existed in very real ways.

The very next day, I asked her about this story again and my daughter told me she made up the entire story—it was all a work of her imagination. I was surprised to hear this because her descriptions were quite vivid and convincing. And yet, I realized, it did not matter if this "really happened" exactly as my daughter recounted this story. The story was plausible because the feelings and experiences around it are real and the internalized and systemic racism that caused my child to imagine this tale are real. Maybe it is because I have heard these stories—or others like them before—dominant narratives about skin color in relation to social positioning. At various points in her childhood, I have heard my own daughter say that she wishes she were White—that she wishes she had straight hair, or that she wishes she were "peach." As I write this, I start to cry, an emotional, embodied response, and I realize that all I can do is try to help

her tell counterstories—even if they begin as speculative works of imagination, so that she and her brother, too, can shape the course of their own identities, their own lives, their own forms of expression.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following are examples of the kinds of interview questions that I employed during individual interviews.

Current Arts Involvement

- How did you get involved with the Teen Arts Internship Program at the CAC?
- Describe one of your most memorable experiences with the Teen Arts Internship Program at the CAC so far.
- What is your primary arts discipline of focus? Do you participate in any other art forms beyond your primary arts discipline? Tell me about your current involvement in these arts disciplines.

Key Experiences in the Arts

- Thinking back to your early childhood, describe one of your earliest memories with making art.
- Describe one of your most memorable experiences in the arts within school.
- Describe one of your most memorable experiences in the arts outside of school.

Making Art

- Name some of the things that you like most about making art.
- Name some of the things that you like least about making art.
- Describe how you feel when you are making art.

Motivations

- Describe a specific experience that was influential in motivating you to become involved in the arts.
- What motivates you to continue to develop yourself as an artist?
- What roadblocks have you experienced in trying to develop yourself as an artist?

Sociocultural Influences

- How do you identify in terms of sociocultural identity markers such as race, gender, class, and/or sexual orientation?
- In what ways does your sociocultural identity influence your artistic identity?

Artistic Self in Relation to Close Others

- Do you have any family members and/or friends who are involved in the arts? If so, who, and in what way? Are your family members and/or friends supportive of your involvement in the arts? If so/not, in what ways?

- Can you tell a story about a time when a family member or friend was supportive or not supportive of your involvement in the arts? Can you describe how you felt when they expressed their support of lack of support for your participation in the arts?

- Tell me about any key mentors or teachers that you have in the visual arts (either here as part of the CAC Teen Arts Internship or elsewhere). Can you tell a story about an experience that you had with this mentor?

Artistic Self in Relation to the Wider World

- Who are your favorite artists? What is it that you like about these artists? Can you describe an experience that you had in viewing or hearing the work of one of these artists?

- What are some general terms used to describe artists in the media or in general discussions about art? How do you feel about these descriptions of artists?

Artistic Self in terms of post-Katrina New Orleans

- Describe what it is like to live in New Orleans today.

- What are the best things about living in New Orleans?

- What are the worst things about living in New Orleans?

- In what ways, if any, has growing up in New Orleans impacted your experiences in the arts?

- Were you living in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina happened? If so, what is your Katrina story?

- In what ways, if any, has Hurricane Katrina impacted your life?

- In what ways, if any, did your experiences around Hurricane Katrina impact your development as an artist?

Identification as an Artist

- Do you view yourself as an artist? If so, why? What is it about you that makes you an artist?

- Describe a moment in your life when you realized that you were an artist.

- Has your involvement in the arts ever helped you in other aspects of your life?

Consequences of being Involved in the Arts

Personal Consequences (in terms of Agency):

- Describe a time, if any, when your involvement in the arts helped you solve a personal problem.
- Describe a time, if any, when creating art helped you emotionally.
- Describe a time, if any, when creating art made you feel empowered.
- What are some other ways that art has helped you in your life?

Social Consequences (in terms of Social Justice):

- Describe an example of the use of art to solve social problems.
- Describe a time, if any, when your involvement in the arts helped you solve a social problem.
- Describe a time, if any, when creating art made others feel empowered.
- What are some other ways that art is beneficial to the world?

Thinking Ahead/Future Selves:

- Thinking ahead, do you plan to further your education in the arts? If so, in what ways?
- Do you want to have a career in the arts? If so, in what ways?
- What are some reasons why you want to pursue further education and/or a career in the arts?
- What challenges do you expect that you might encounter if you were to pursue a career in the arts?

APPENDIX B

DRAWING PROMPTS

- Select an object that you have with you that represents you and/or your experiences as an artist. Draw this object and write a paragraph about this object and how it relates to your experiences as an artist. Then, tell the group about your selected object and what it means to you.
- Compose a portrait that represents you. This could be a literal self-portrait drawing, an abstract drawing of yourself, or a performance of some sort. Write a brief statement about your portrait. Then, share your portrait with the group, describing the choices that you made in creating this portrait.

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